Walsall & Willenhall
CHRONICLE
Thursday, January 11, 2018 | Read by more than 78,000 people | Price when sold 70p

Man impersonated his brother to get taxi licence

BANNED DRIVER POSED AS CABBIE

Report by Carl Jackson

A TAXI driver has been jailed for more than two years after impersonating his brother to get a licence and carrying out hundreds of jobs while disqualified.

Moshin Zeb was banned from the road in September 2013 for dangerous driving.

But last year the 24-year-old gave fraudulent papers to Walsall Council to gain a licence to drive taxis and private hire vehicles in the borough. The documents were in the name of his brother. Between February 7 and March 16 he racked up more than 500 pre-booked taxi journeys, all for profit, despite the fact he was not allowed to drive and was not insured.

But his elaborate ruse was foiled when a member of the public tipped off the council who discovered Zeb was not who he said he was.

He was charged with five counts of fraud in relation to the documents he supplied the authority between January and April last year.

He was also charged with driving whilst disqualified and driving without a licence.

Insured

Zeb, of George Road in Erdington, later admitted the allegations in court. At Wolverhampton Crown Court on Thursday he was sentenced to 28 months in prison for the multiple counts of fraud. He was also sentenced to four months for driving whilst disqualified and four more months for having no insurance, but all sentences are to be served concurrently.

Zeb was also disqualified from driving for three years and six months.

Judge Wassall told him he had put hundreds of passengers at risk knowing that they would not have been insured. He added that he had placed members of the public in an 'insidious position'. Councillor Ian Shires, culture and leisure chief, said: "He knew exactly what he was doing when he started impersonating his brother; taxi drivers are in a position of trust and the public have a right to feel safe each time they use their services.

"The fact that Mr Zeb was disqualified for dangerous driving says it all really.

"This case highlights the important work that our enforcement officers do to ensure that taxis are a safe transport option for the public."

27 YEARS ON – TOY FAIR STILL MODEL OF SUCCESS

Co-organiser Geoff Price, at the toys fair

Inside the hall of the centre at Walsall Wood

Ann Benton from Wednesbury with her model vehicles at the Oak Park Active Living Centre

A TOY fair that began 27 years ago is still going strong, after collectors flocked to pick up everything from rare Star Wars figures to jigsaws. Linda and Geoff Price have held their toy and collectibles fair since June 1991 – and like a fine wine, it has improved with age.

With visitor levels just shy of 500 last weekend, the pair are now looking to continue events in Oak Park Active Living Centre in Walsall.

Linda Price, aged 62, from Walsall, said: "It has improved – we started off in the old Oak Park Leisure Centre in the small hall and then we progressed to the larger hall.

"Over the last 12 months they have opened a big new living centre – it is a big hall again.

"We have over 80 tables of collectibles for the public to see, we are dealing with the traders who have been following us for many, many years.

"For us that is about right for this time of year, this is the first one we have done since Christmas.

The next one is March 18 – we do March, May, September, November and January. Collecting is a luxury rather than an essential, we get a lot of senior people in but we do get the families as well."

Linda's husband, Geoff, 67, has been collecting metal buses since the age of nine when his parents bought him one for Christmas in the 1950s.

Now, still collecting, he has amassed 14,200 metal buses, which he keeps at home.

Mr Price said: "At the moment it is about 14,200. I have been collecting since I was nine-years-old and I am 67 now – a long time.

"Collecting has changed over the years, we get more older people in now than younger ones. It is nostalgia for the older ones now and these collector fairs give you the opportunity to buy very old models.

"We cover all sorts of toys, Star Wars figures, Lego, jigsaws, books and metal railway sets.

"The support is there for it and the customers are coming in and spending."

The pair also run fairs in Cannock, Lichfield, Brierley Hill, Wolverhampton, Stourbridge and Dudley. For details go to www.transtar-promotions.co.uk

MONEY

Card skimming device is found

A BANK card skimming device was found on a cash machine at a bank in Aldridge after a customer smelled glue. The machines work by capturing data from the magnetic strip. It was handed in to the branch on Friday.

North Aldridge Neighbourhood Watch moved to warn people about the device.

A Facebook post from the group said: "Using a cash machine today in Aldridge or other places – Be Warned. A resident reports the following: 'Took this opposite Wetherspoons in Aldridge this morning. Looks like it's made to catch your card before comes back out. Luckily I noticed it looked a bit dodgy. Could still smell the glue so hadn't been put on long.'"

POLICE

Three arrested after crime tip-off

THREE people have been arrested in Walsall following a crime crackdown.

As part of Operation Vibrant West Midlands Police raided a property in Monarch Grove and two addresses at Webster Road around 1.30pm last Tuesday.

The force confirmed they acted following tip-offs from the public.

They recovered cannabis, cash, jewellery and a suspected stolen car.

MUSIC

Pop star Ezra joins Forest Live line up

POP sensation George Ezra will play this year's Forest Live. The 24-year-old singer-songwriter from Hertford will play the Cannock Chase show on the last of the event's three days, on July 1.

Tickets to see Ezra go on sale tomorrow, Friday at 9am, priced £34.50 each. Call the Forestry Commission on 03000 680400, or buy online at forestry.gov.uk/music

INSIDE

Strum thing for charity coffers

PAGE 9

abbey blinds

abbey curtains

abbey cushions

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Instagram video led to harassment case

A MAN filmed himself hurling abuse at his autistic neighbour before uploading the video on social media.

Ryan Perry went outside his home in Chantry Avenue, Bloxwich and started hurling insults at the victim and his father who were washing a car.

The 22-year old-was prompted to do it after looking out of his window and seeing the young man was acting 'stupidly amusingly', Walsall Magistrates' Court heard.

But the unprovoked tirade which took place on December 5 unravelled when Perry put the video on Instagram prompting a backlash from people who thought it was inappropriate. One of them was the victim's cousin who told fellow family members.

Perry was arrested by police and charged with 'harassment without violence'. Prosecutor Mr Tim Talbot-Webb said: "The victim in this case is a young adult who suffers with various learning disabilities, particularly autism.

"On 5 of December he was outside his house helping his father clean his car. The defendant went outside, he is a neighbour, and started making a number of offensive comments.

"He uploaded that on Instagram. the injured party's cousin was made aware of it and told the family."

In applying for a restraining order. He said the victim now felt even more vulnerable because his father had passed away since the incident occurred.

A solicitor speaking on Perry's behalf told the court he was unaware of the victim's condition and he removed the video an hour later because of the reaction. The lawyer also said he was hugely apologetic. Perry admitted the charge which he committed days before a conditional discharge for criminal damage was due to expire. Magistrates handed him a 12-month community order which requires him to carry out a 10-day rehabilitation activity and 100 days of unpaid work. He was told to pay £135 in costs and an £85 victim surcharge.

The magistrates also granted the restraining order meaning Perry cannot make any contact with the victim or put anything on social media relating to him.

Appeal over murder of pensioner renewed

POLICE investigating the murder of a pensioner have renewed a £10,000 appeal for information – with officers desperate for one caller to get back in touch.

Arthur Gumbley, aged 87, died three weeks after being badly beaten during a violent robbery at his home in Little Aston.

Mr Gumbley

A major public appeal for information had been well supported, said Staffordshire Police Det Insp Dan Inson.

But he called for more help and urged a person who got in contact on December 18 to come back to them. Four people were last month arrested on suspicion of the pensioner's murder. All were released on bail while investigations continue.

DI Inson said: "I first want to thank the public for the support we have had, but there is one person who contacted us on December 18. They have specifics which will assist our investigation. Part of my appeal is for that person to get in touch with us as soon as they can. I want to assure them it is anonymous and they can communicate with us in a number of ways That person provided named people who could have been responsible."

The robbery took place at Mr Gumbley's home in Endwood Drive on November 21. He later died on December 12.

Several items taken in the robbery have been recovered, but some, including a watch and bracelet are missing.

As part of the appeal Crimestoppers offered a £10,000 reward for anyone with information leading to the arrest and conviction of the offenders.Anyone with information has been urged to call 101 and quote incident number 828 of November 21. Crimestoppers can also be contacted anonymously by calling 0800 555111.

Pets food-bowled over by support

Qualified Veterinary Nurse Amy Duncalf with pet owners' 'Give a Pet a Christmas Dinner' donations

A VET practice in Great Wyrley invited clients to contribute to their December 'Give a Pet a Christmas Dinner' campaign, and has collected 496 tins and pouches of cat and dog food and over 83kg of dry pet food to support local homeless cats and dogs.

This is the fourth year 387 Veterinary Centre have run the month-long initiative. This year, donations are being shared between Sunnyside Kennels, Ravens Rescue, Rugeley Cats Society and Ashmore Rescue for Cats (ARC).

"We're constantly touched by the incredible generosity of our clients," said vet and Clinical Director of 387 Vets, Hamish Duncan. "Whilst food donations were on a par with previous collections, this year we've received many more pet toys and treats, as well as blankets and bedding. Pets will love playing with their new Christmas gifts and we hope the donations will help to make the wait for a new loving family fly by."

More information about the above charities can be found on their Facebook Pages, or for Sunnyside Kennels and Ravens Rescue, visit their websites at www.birminghamdogshome.org.uk and www.ravensrescueuk.weebly.com respectively.

REVIEW

Harmonious performance in debut slot

Aquire
Forest Arts Centre, Leamore, Walsall
Monday December 18, 2017

THIS was the debut solo concert for a choir which has only existed for a few months. Its founder, James Maddison, who works as choral leader and singing teacher for the Walsall Music Hub says that he invited people who share his passion for close-harmony singing to join him, in the belief that they 'could accomplish anything'.

The 15-strong group certainly vindicated his confidence with this polished performance of an extensive, Christmas-themed list of mainly a capella pieces, containing testing harmonies and vocal accompaniments. They were remarkably well-disciplined and sang as one throughout with apparent ease.

The entire group had the opportunity to show their skills in a variety of individual items, which were delivered to the same high standard as the choral numbers.

The presentation was, in the main, informal, and was most ably introduced by leader, James Maddison, in a manner that suited the atmosphere created by the audience's table and chair seating.

BRYAN TILL

Motorist admits to causing death

A 24-YEAR-OLD man has admitted causing the death of a cyclist through dangerous driving. Kade Scrivens was at the wheel of a BMW when the hit and run accident occurred in Midland Road, Darlaston, at 3.20am on November 22.

Mr Nicholas Harrison, 59, was pronounced dead at the scene after being knocked from his bike, police said later. The defendant, from Booth Street, Handsworth, later handed himself in.

Scrivens admitted the offence when he appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on January 3 but the case was adjourned by Judge John Wait so relatives of the deceased had an opportunity to attend when sentence was passed. The defendant was remanded until January 23 when he is expected to be sentenced.

Families invited to try out cycling

FAMILIES are being invited to enjoy the great outdoors. The Wheel We Make It cycling club, based in Walsall, hosts regular Saturday morning and Tuesday and Thursday evening rides.

This Saturday the ride starts from Oak Park Leisure Centre in Walsall Wood at 9.30am. The group is also joining forces with Walsall CTC group for a number of rides. Visit www.chasecycling.co.uk for more details.

Fury over plans for manufacture of sleepers

NEIGHBOURS are 'up in arms' about proposals to build a factory which will create 600,000 railway sleepers a year, and have vowed to fight the plan.

Network Rail wants to develop the manufacturing plant at the railway sidings at Bescot, which falls into the Friar Park area of Wednesbury, on the border with Walsall.

The site sits directly alongside the M6 southbound just south of Junction 9. Network Rail announced the scheme last year saying it would secure 100 jobs in the region but residents have expressed fears about the impact, in particular noise, the visual appearance and effect on the environment.

They will get the chance to voice their concerns at an exhibition to be held at Friar Park Millennium Centre on Wednesday from 6pm.

Councillor Simon Hackett, who represents the ward, has backed residents. He said: "Residents who live in Tiffany Green back on to the site. They have had enough as they already experience problems with the big Lidl there due to the visual impact and the noise. They also have to put up with the motorway and the big signs there.

"There is massive opposition to this, the residents are up in arms and I am on their side."

Announcing the scheme last year Martin Frobisher, route managing director of Network Rail's London and North Western route, had said: "Network Rail remains committed to the West Midlands economy which is why Bescot has been identified as our preferred location for the new factory."

Police appeal over incident

A MAN is wanted by police for allegedly exposing himself to two teenage girls. West Midlands Police has reissued an appeal for a suspect believed to have committed indecent exposure in Walsall last year.

The image

Two teenage girls said the man approached them on Stephenson Avenue in Beechdale around 3.45pm on Saturday, October 28. The force has released a picture of a man they want to speak to in relation with the incident. He is black and in the picture is wearing a black baseball cap with a red Michael Jordan logo, a red T-shirt, black trousers and a dark blue or black padded jacket with a hood.

Anyone with information should contact DC Nigel Smith at Bloxwich police station on 101.

Level crossing to shut down permanently

An overhead view of the crossing

BLOXWICH level crossing is to permanently close as Network Rail continues to upgrade the railway between Walsall and Rugeley Trent Valley. The upgrade and electrification of the line, part of the Railway Upgrade Plan, means that trains will be faster, more frequent and quieter through the area.

To keep local people safe and reduce risk, the crossing will be permanently closed from midnight on Saturday.

Network Rail has worked closely with Walsall Council to plan the closure and provide alternative ways of crossing the railway. A new road bridge at Central Drive provides access over the railway for motorists. A pedestrian footbridge will be built and is due to open in summer 2018.

While the crossing is closed and the footbridge is being built, a free shuttle service will be provided for pedestrians who need to cross the railway.

Eddie Hughes, MP for Walsall North, said: "Although the level crossing is closing, in the interim, Network Rail will be providing a minibus service to ferry people from one side of the crossing to the other before a footbridge is installed. This will cause some inconvenience in the short term however in the long term there is going to be a tremendous amount of benefits, as it will mean faster and more frequent trains with improved safety."

Martin Tiller, sponsor for the Chase Line upgrade for Network Rail, said the move would 'make it safer for local people to cross the railway'.

For more information visit www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/lnw/chase-line-electrification-rugeley-to-walsall/.

Fund to continue Jill's campaign tops £20,000

By David Banner

MORE than £20,500 has been donated towards setting up a trust carrying on the legacy and work of rape campaigner Jill Saward as the first anniversary of her death passes.

Husband Gavin Drake has revealed that he hopes a charity will now be launched this year in his wife's name. Ms Saward, aged 51, from Hednesford, became a victims' rights campaigner after being raped at her father's Ealing vicarage in 1986. She was the first rape victim to waive her anonymity.

The mother-of-three died a year ago in Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital following a stroke. In an emotional New Year's Eve blog, her husband has told of his 'own personal annus horribilis'. He wrote that last new year he said on social media '2017: If you thought 2016 was bad, you ain't seen nothing yet.'

The blog added: "This was a sentence that haunted me all year: three days later, on 3 January, my wife Jill was rushed into hospital after collapsing. She had suffered a stroke – a subarachnoid haemorrhage.

Decided

"She died two days later without regaining consciousness. The remainder of 2017 has been awful. My own personal annus horribilis. I can't wait to see the back of it. Don't get me wrong: there were some good points to the year: and without fail, they all had one thing in common: the love, the care, and the compassion shown to me by members of my family, my friends, and even strangers – and especially strangers who became friends."

He talked about how he and his wife had lived in many places during their marriage including Walsall, Stafford, Liverpool and Telford but had decided to put off any further moves until their youngest son had left secondary school, although they had discussed where they would like to go.

But, he said: "Now, the idea of moving no longer appeals. It isn't just because here is where I have so many memories; it is also because planning for the future now meant planning for a future without Jilly, I know that my future is without her.

"But facing that, and planning for it, are two different things. I can face up to the first; I struggled with the second." Jill's sister and niece have moved into the house in Hednesford which he described as 'an absolute life-saver.' "Jilly was such a big part of me that when she died, so much of me did too. I had no reason to live. I had no reason to be."

Jill and Gavin – 'Jilly was such a big part of me that when she died, so much of me did too'

Jill died a year ago in Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital following a stroke

Helping look after his niece had given him something to do, he said. Gavin described how hard Christmas had been – her favourite time of year – ahead of the anniversary of her death on January 5 and what would have been her birthday on January 15. He added: "This year, I have been defined by losing Jill. It has more than changed me. The loss was me. But now, as we approach 2018, I can once more look ahead."

Freelance journalist Mr Drake, who is also the Walsall FC matchday announcer, said he was now starting a full-time job having had months of 2017 when he could do virtually no work. Almost 600 people have donated to the JustGiving fund aiming to raise enough money for a trust in the name of Jill and to carry on her work as a fierce campaigner for justice and for specialist support services for rape survivors.

Robbers broke into her home at a vicarage in Ealing, London, in 1986, and raped her then seriously assaulted her father, the Rev Michael Saward, as well as her boyfriend at the time.

The attackers received a lenient sentence and her fierce campaigning led to direct changes in the law. Mr Drake said in a radio interview that it was 'fantastic' that so much money had been donated and the charity would continue Ms Saward's work campaigning and speaking out on behalf of victims of sexual violence.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spate of crime over a few days

RESIDENTS have been hit by a spate of burglaries and car break-ins. West Midlands Police has released details of seven incidents. Between 6-9pm on Friday December 29, a thief smashed a car window in Sneyd Lane, Bloxwich, stealing a dashboard camera.

Another vehicle was targeted in the same road during the early hours of New Year's Day. Also on the Friday a burglar smashed their way through the front door of a home in Gainsborough Crescent in Pheasey around 6pm but fled when they were disturbed.

Around about the same time intruders got in to a home in Charlemont Road but left empty-handed.

Eleanor blamed for disruption

RESIDENTS' bin collections were delayed by a week due to Storm Eleanor.

Walsall Council stated that the inclement weather had damaged the main waste disposal centre at Fryers Road, Bloxwich. It meant several collections due to take place last Thursday were cancelled until today (January 11).

The council was still playing catch-up from the heavy snowfall and subsequent icy roads over Christmas.

A Facebook post said: "Storm Eleanor has caused structural damage to the facility at Fryers Road."

Gloucestershire walk for group

RAMBLERS will be heading off to Gloucestershire on Sunday, in a change to the walk published in their programme.

Following their 7.5 mile 'Wrekin Romp' circular walk last week, the Walsall Group of the Ramblers are getting their walking boots out to sample the delights of Dymock, near Ledbury, for a 9.5 mile circular walk.

Non-members are always welcome, contact the walk leaders on 01922 691167. More general details are available at www.walsallramblers.org.uk, also on Facebook and Twitter.

Traveller sites reduced after court injunctions

THE number of illegal traveller encampments reduced last year on the back of Walsall Council securing a number of injunctions.

Despite high profile sites popping up in 2017, the total number of camps on council land fell from 71 in 2016 to 63 last year.

The council secured a landmark county court injunction in 2016 granting greater powers to remove travellers from 12 sites more speedily.

COUNTY NEWS

Best in Brum to be awarded

AN awards ceremony recognising the achievements of Birmingham people has returned for another year.

Nominations are now open for the Pride of Birmingham Awards, run in partnership with TSB. Entry closes on January 26, before the winners will be announced at a glitzy-star studded event at The Great Hall in Birmingham University on March 8.

Dawn Megginson, area director TSB West Midlands says: "There are thousands of ordinary people right across Britain who do extraordinary things every day to help others in their local communities." Visit www.prideofbritain.com/birmingham

Splashing the cash on treats

PEOPLE in the West Midlands would be willing to fork out £107 for an extra week's holiday allowance at work, a survey reveals.

They would also spend £103 for a month of nice weather and £82 for someone to deep clean their home. A personal shopper to buy all their Christmas presents was also high on the list, with people willing to pay £71 to offload the task.

Those interviewed would part with £68 for someone to sort out and manage their bills and the survey, by loan provider Wonga, also revealed people would splash out £49 for an extra hour in bed.

£100 waiting for best room

A STAFFORDSHIRE-based home furnishing business is running a competition to find the UK's best spare room. Terry's Fabrics is encouraging people from the Black Country and Staffordshire to get involved with the competition.

The winner will receive £100 worth of Terry's Fabrics products. A team of judges will choose the winner based on originality and uniqueness. To enter, share a photo of a spare room at www.terrysfabrics.co.uk with a caption.

University's open day next month

THE University of Wolverhampton is holding an open day on February 17 for all would-be students interested in gaining more qualifications to further themselves or chase certain careers.

Visitors can look around facilities, meet lecturers and see the student accommodation for themselves. For further details on the open day, contact the enquiries team on 0800 953 3222 or email enquiries@wlv.ac.uk

Ratings issued after inspections of nearly 1,000 premises

New Oriental Garden, in Beeches Road, Bloxwich

Surti News, Broadway West, Walsall

Taste of Home takeaway in Moat Road

Council takes action on food firm failings

By Carl Jackson

SCORES of food businesses failed hygiene inspections in 2017, while seven were temporarily shut down, four were prosecuted and another caused a salmonella outbreak.

Walsall Council officers visited nearly 1,000 premises last year.

Food Standards Agency records show that the authority dished out six basement zero ratings demanding 'urgent' improvement and more than 70 level one ratings requiring 'major' improvement.

Dozens more including a school club were given a two rating falling below 'satisfactory' standards. The findings come as an Environmental Health report for the borough has been published for the last 12 months.

Infestations

It reveals for the first time that nine people fell ill last from salmonella after eating kebab meat and salad which was traced back to a takeaway.

The council would not reveal the identity of the firm, which has since closed, stating legal action was pending.

The document also states that seven businesses were served with Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices ordering them to close due to serious rat or mice infestations.

They were Willenhall Supermarket on Walsall Road, Bangla Store on Milton Street, Shake & Grill on Stafford Street, High Street Cafe in Walsall Wood, F B Supermarket on Milton Street, Chicken.com on Stafford Street and Pizza Cottage on Caldmore Road. All but Willenhall Supermarket addressed the issues and have re-opened.

The council took four businesses to court during 2017 – East End Tandoori on Hawes Close, was fined £2,400, hit with £1,600 costs and a £40 victim surcharge; Beijing House on Bloxwich Road was fined £400 and told to pay £1,500 in costs and a £40 surcharge; Bucaresti in Caldmore Green, faced a £1,800 fine, £2,497.50 in costs and a £180 surcharge; and Pool Street Chippy was given a £400 fine, £1,837 costs bill and £48 surcharge.

Blakenall One Call Peri Peri Chicken, in Blakenall Lane

Aunt Sally's Caribbean takeaway in Bridge Street

The council chose not to issue notices to those they handed a zero hygiene rating stating they simply required them to address the issues. Those businesses were Blakenall One Call Peri Peri Chicken on Blakenall Lane, New Oriental Garden on Beeches Road, Aunt Sally's on Bridge Street, Surti News on Broadway West, and The Taste of Home on Moat Road.

In total 86 per cent of businesses in Walsall are rated satisfactory or better – level 3 to 5 – including those that were inspected last year. Councillor Ian Shires, communities and leisure chief, argued that the authority was very active on cracking down on hygiene.

He said: "We take the safety of our residents very seriously and are a comparatively tough, as well as diligent, authority when it comes to enforcement and numbers of premises inspected.

"We have rated 89 per cent of premises – 10 per cent more than the regional average of 79 per cent.

"I'm pleased to report that less than half a per cent of businesses inspected were awarded a zero rating, whilst some 45 per cent received the maximum rating of 5. However, the situation is ever changing. As new owners take over businesses they are re-rated, businesses close, new businesses open and every time officers inspect a premises, the rating could go up, go down or stay the same.

"The current position is 403 premises in the borough saw their rating improved, 158 saw their rating go down whilst some 670 remained the same. Clearly it is in the businesses' own interest to ensure they comply with regulation and produce safe food as a better rating should give them an advantage over neighbouring businesses."

He added: "We have set the bar quite high and have seen a great deal of improvement over time. People will know what to expect when they walk into somewhere to buy food. In the last 12 months we have been more proactive in publishing stuff, getting the outlets to be proud of what they do, if they are doing good they should be shouting about it.

"It is not about trying to catch people out it is about raising standards."

He added: "It is about raising standards through transparency."

● **Visit the the story at Expressandstar.com for a list of the firm rated below satisfactory during 2017.**

Tip workers help woman find thrown away £1,000

THERE were tears of relief for one woman after binmen helped find £1,040 she had accidentally thrown away in the rubbish.

The woman went to the Household Recycling Centre on Shidas Lane in Oldbury to throw away some black bags filled with waste after decorating her baby's bedroom.

What she didn't know at the time was that she was also throwing away a roll of £1,040 of her own cash, which she had accidentally swept into one of the bags alongside the rubbish. In a panic the resident came back to the depot the following morning before it was due to open.

Serco waste team members Gary Smith, Tom Holland and Jason Timmins immediately stepped in to help, opening up the skip and hunting through mound upon mound of household rubbish.

After nearly three hours of fruitless searching, they eventually found the £1,040 of missing money right at the bottom of the skip, tied together with a rubber band. Overjoyed to be reunited with her cash, the woman, who didn't want to be named, burst into tears with relief and hugged the team.

She later returned to once again express her gratitude, giving the team a gift of a tin of biscuits and a box of samosas for their trouble.

Serco Sandwell boss John Mason said: "When the team saw how upset the resident was they immediately volunteered to help. Hunting through piles of rubbish for nearly three hours is no-one's idea of fun, but they said the look on the lady's face when they finally found the money definitely made it all worthwhile."

School demolition plan thumbs up

A PROPOSAL to demolish and rebuild a primary school has been given the go-ahead, despite concerns about road safety.

The Department for Education had put forward the scheme to expand Rivers Primary Academy in Bloxwich.

It will see it increase from a 1.5 form entry to a two form, while a 52-place nursery will also be built. Walsall Council's planning committee gave 'delegated approval' to the scheme on Thursday evening meaning it will go ahead but officers have issues to resolve around a new access on to the busy Goscote Lane.

Councillor Angela Underhill, deputy chairman of the committee, said: "More consideration needs to be given around the safety of the new entrance off Goscote Lane."

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Poundland celebrates best ever Christmas

POUNDLAND, the Black Country-based discount retail giant, has revealed its best-ever set of Christmas figures. It's flagship store in Wolverhampton was one of 121 nationwide that racked up sales of £100,000 in a single week.

Over the festive period bargain-hunting shoppers stripped Poundland's shelves of more than five million rolls of wrapping paper, a million units of tinsel; over 26 million Christmas Cards and 28 million Christmas tree baubles.

And the Willenhall-headquartered company hailed its controversial "Elf Behaving Badly" social media campaign, saying it had pulled in 'significant numbers of shoppers' during the final week, with more than 200,000 'bad' elves sold. Other best-sellers included a range of light-up wine bottles, novelty £1 mugs and almost 250,000 items from Poundland's new Nooky range of sex toys.

Poundland sold out of its 500,000 own label chocolate bar Twin Peaks while sales of Toblerones also rose to 3.3 million over the three months to Christmas Eve – enough to stretch up and down the M6 2.5 times. Total confectionery sales increased by nine per cent, or £3.5 million.

Managing director, Barry Williams said: "This Christmas, sales have even exceeded our high expectations."

Library opening hours boost bid

OPENING hours at half a dozen libraries across the borough could be expanded in a move which would allow visitors to go along when the buildings were unstaffed.

Walsall Council stated work is 'ongoing' towards installing the 'Open+ access control system' at libraries in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston, Willenhall and Streetly.

It is hoped the scheme could be rolled out in phases across the sites within the 2018/19 financial year.

Culture chief, Councillor Ian Shires, said: "It is about trying to make the service more user friendly. People would have a card to get in, that's how it tends to work in other places in the country we have looked at."

Police seek rider

AN appeal has been issued for a moped rider involved in 'suspicious activity'.

West Midlands Police wants to track down a 'teenage boy' seen on a black bike, wearing a black and yellow helmet, who has 'caused alarm' in the Aldridge and Streetly areas. Call police on 101.

Blakemore grants boost for causes

A cheque presented to Central Youth Theatre

FAMILY business A F Blakemore & Son has awarded a dozen good causes a grant of £1,917 each.

They have been given through its charitable trust, the Blakemore Foundation, marking last year's centenary of the Willenhalll company.

It launched a 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme to support local good causes, not only in the Black Country, but across the UK.

The company accepted applications over spring and summer.

Among those helped was Central Youth Theatre in Wolverhampton.

A F Blakemore community affairs oficer Kate Senter said: "A F Blakemore & Son has a long history of supporting local good causes and the 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme has complemented this perfectly.

"The 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme received more than 400 worthy requests from good causes across the UK.

"It is hoped that each grant will support the local good cause's sustainability for years to come in recognition of the company's commitment to growing sustainably for the benefit of staff, customers and the community."

The company also marked its centenary year in 2017 with a series of focus weeks and charity birthday parties

The Blakemore Foundation was established by the Blakemore family in 1992 and over the last decade has donated more than £1.7 million to good causes across the company's trading area, which stretches across England and Wales.

Manor ordered to scrap ops to help free up beds

WALSALL Manor Hospital has been ordered to cancel operations in a desperate bid to free up beds and medical staff.

In an unprecedented move, NHS England has told Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust to delay pre-planned operations and routine outpatient appointments until the end of the month due to severe winter pressures.

But bosses have vowed to press ahead with surgical procedures, and say priority will be given to urgent cases.

Roseanne Crossey, the trust's head of business development and planning, said the hospital had 'opened up additional capacity' to meet extra demand. "We are where we expected to be at this busy time of year," she said. "Our primary concern is the safe care of our patients, whether they are in the hospital, at home or being treated in the community.

"Our surgical procedures are going ahead with priority being given to cancer and urgent cases." Additional support put in place by the trust includes longer hours in GP surgeries, while efforts are ongoing to discharge patients more quickly.

Trust bosses have also warned patients to stay away from the hospital's A&E department unless their conditions require urgent treatment. The trust came under increasing strain in the run up to Christmas, posting bed occupancy rates that were among the highest in the country.

NHS England said that across the country up to 55,000 operations could be delayed this month, although cancer operations and time-critical procedures should go ahead as planned. Rules banning mixed sex wards have been temporarily lifted, while consultants with cancelled operations on their books have been asked to help man the doors of A&E wards.

Officials said it was hoped that the measures will free up senior hospital doctors to triage more patients in A&E, be available for phone advice for GPs and ensure that patients in hospitals are reviewed twice each day to help timely discharges.

Saddlers' £2,000 boost for Isabella

Isabella, next to Walsall FC mascot Swifty, with friends and family

Luke Leahy donates his money

A FUNDRAISING campaign to get a 10-year-old girl to America for life-saving treatment has almost reached half-way.

Isabella Lyttle's story has touched the hearts of the community, including at Walsall FC where supporters donated £2,000 on Saturday. Player Luke Leahy also gave his match appearance fee of £100. So far, around £70,000 has been collected for the schoolgirl, who needs treatment in New York for neuroblastoma. But, despite closing in on the half-way point, much more is needed to meet the £155,000 cost.

Father Mark Lyttle said: "We've had so much support which we are grateful of, but we still need much more. Getting this far has made us believe we can do it."

The next fundraiser for Isabella will be held at Walsall's Tesco store. A day of bucket collections will take place after the supermarket got onboard the campaign. Isabella is also to travel to London in February for radioactive therapy.

Mr Lyttle said: "We are having a break from public fundraising for her treatment but we hope the support keeps coming in."

Donate to Isabella's campaign at justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/solvingkidscancer/isabellalyttle. Pledges can also be made by texting ISLY88 £1-10 to 70070

NEWS IN BRIEF

Masterpiece at Walsall gallery

A MASTERPIECE from the National Gallery is coming to the New Art Gallery in Walsall.

Hans Holbein's A Lady With a Squirrel and a Starling will be the centrepiece in the family gallery from tomorrow, Friday. It is being shown alongside works from the Walsall gallery's permanent collection.

A preview night is due tonight, Thursday, from 6pm to 8pm.

On February 8 at 2pm Dr Susan Foister, deputy director of The National Gallery, will be visiting to discuss the painting. It is free to attend but places need to be booked on 01922 654400.

Ex-Walsall player Alan Deakin dies

FORMER Walsall FC and Aston Villa player Alan Deakin has died. The Birmingham-born winger bagged 50 appearances with the Saddlers joining in 1969 and playing until 1972.

He had arrived at Walsall from the Villans where he had featured much more prominently racking up 270 matches in a decade from 1959 to 1969. Walsall FC confirmed the 76-year-old had died, tweeting: "Walsall Football Club are saddened to hear of the passing of our former player Alan Deakin.

"Our condolences go out to Alan's family and friends at this sad time."

Fewer traveller sites in borough

THE number of illegal traveller encampments reduced in the borough last year on the back of Walsall Council securing a number of injunctions.

Despite high profile sites popping up in 2017, notoriously including Walsall Arboretum and Aldridge Airport, the total number of camps on council land fell from 71 in 2017 to 63 last year.

While those on private plots dropped to 16 from 27.

The council secured a landmark county court injunction in 2016 granting greater powers to remove travellers from 12 sites more speedily.

Blues stalwarts at city's Guildhall

BRITISH blues stars Paul Jones and Dave Kelly will perform in Staffordshire on Saturday.

Former Manfred Mann singer Jones and guitarist Kelly are also members of The Blues Band. The duo will be on the Lichfield Arts calendar, in the Guildhall, Bore Street, at 8pm.

For further information about ticket prices and their availability for the show call the box office direct on 01543 262223.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Protest: It's lettuce leaves at the ready

THINGS aren't looking too good for Carlinis, a new Italian restaurant in Albrighton, where the chef boasted on Facebook about "spiking" a vegan's meal.

Laura Goodman has now quit, after militant vegans reportedly threatened to target the restaurant. You can always spot militant vegan protesters. They only throw lettuce leaves and lentils.

❒❒❒

THAT said, I now find myself eating more vegan-friendly food than ever before, after being told at one of those routine mid-life health checks that my cholesterol is too high. Not dramatically, but I do need to improve my diet. It seems cream crackers in the morning, bread-and-butter seasoned with a couple of pork scratchings for lunch, and microwaved meatballs and spuds at night won't really cut it any more.

In the past I would have shrugged this off, but a few deaths over the past few years – some close – have made me ponder how fleeting life can be. So I now consume an extortionately-priced health drink each day, as well as five portions of fruit and veg.

Now I've always been a five-a-day sceptic, mainly because I don't like glib soundbites trotted out by the sort of people who think there is a place in the English language for terms such as "stakeholders" and "outreach". And it's time consuming.

The initial plan was to buy an appropriate selection of fruit and veg, and stick it in the blender to make one disgusting drink which I could wolf down once a night and be done with. If only.

Unfortunately, liquefied food can only account for one of the five. So a glass of orange juice seems less bother.

Then there is the question of what constitutes a "portion". Government guidelines say 80g, but I suspect that means as little to you as it does to me.

An apple counts as one, which I can eat while I work, although peeling and slicing it the night before to avoid losing teeth is seriously tedious.

I hoped a large box of chopped swedes and carrots would be the answer, but you have to eat half the packet for it to count as one of the five. No wonder there's an obesity crisis.

So my nights now consist of glugging orange juice while the peas and carrots simmer in the pan. Then, after News at Ten, its time for some fruit – usually strawberries (no sugar) or pineapples – washed down with a bottle of Benecol to make it taste nicer. Can't tell you how much I'm loving life at the moment.

Interesting phrase, hardly used, and a little bit weird

Kim Jong-un and "I've got a bigger nuclear button than you" contest

Lord Adonis – wants to be free to campaign for a second EU referendum

Hattie Jacques – we get all wistful about some legendary golden nursing age

Bearing the brunt of this quirky word

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

QUIRKY phrases department. It was reported this week that coastal areas "bore the brunt" of Storm Eleanor. Interesting word, brunt. Nobody really knows where the word comes from and we hardly ever use it except when something or someone is bearing it. Brunt. The more you say it, the weirder it sounds.

ABOUT 1,400 cars were destroyed in the spectacular car-park fire in Liverpool. I wonder how many insurance different claims will be made.

THE wonder is that such fires are so rare. If you take the gloomy view, a multi-storey car park is basically a pile of petrol bombs parked closely to each other with its sides open to the wind and with ramps helpfully providing a route for an inferno to grow and spread. It sometimes occurs to me that if the internal-combustion engine were invented today, it would never get past the health-and-safety people. So, Mr Inventor, in order to refuel these so-called cars of yours, you will need 100,000-gallon petrol tanks buried in the centre of all our towns and cities, and you will park these cars in thousands of high-rise crematoria? Not a chance.

IT is hard to rejoice at the 70th anniversary of the NHS when we have spent the past seven decades moaning that it has never been as good as it used to be. We get all wistful about some legendary golden age, usually involving tightly-folded bedsheets, carbolic and Hattie Jacques. The big difference between 1948 and 2018 is the nature of patients and their illnesses. Seventy years ago the sick were, by and large, ill as a result of things done to them by the establishment.They were the wounded and shell-shocked of two world wars, the victims of damp slums, dangerous factories, dusty coal mines and malnutrition. They were the hapless customers who believed the all-pervading propaganda that smoking was not only fashionable but good for you. Today, NHS waiting lists are stuffed with people who are bombarded with healthy-living advice but prefer to ignore it and are ill as a result of lifestyle choices. And while it may be wrong to ration or refuse NHS treatment to those who have screwed up their own health, you can't help thinking what the hungry, bronchitic, war-wounded patients of 1948 would make of the obese, hungover patients of today. They might well ask: "What are you doing in the queue?"

ONE of my New Year resolutions is to be kinder to the generation usually described as millennials, hipsters or snowflakes. But I'm putting it on hold for a while, having stumbled across a report on an assortment of twentysomethings moaning about how they cannot afford to get on the property ladder. One is described as "a part-time writer and illustrator" while another says she is a "marketing and lifestyle blogger." Listen, kids. These are not jobs. They are, at best, hobbies. This explains why the building society manager's eyes do not light up when he gets your mortgage-application form. Get a proper, full-time job, put in all the overtime you can, save a few grand and try again.

ONE of the enduring mysteries of the internet age is that people who are already online will email or text about an issue without first making an elementary check on Google. For those who harangued me on the subject, there is nothing blasphemous, lazy or ungrammatical about the term Xmas.

OH, dear. Donald Trump has got into an "I've got a bigger nuclear button than you" contest with Kim Jong-un. Whatever next?

MEANWHILE, it is revealed that thousands of medical emergencies are being answered not by paramedics but by specially-trained firefighters. "Hello, is that 999? I've got this burning sensation."

ADONIS wants to be free to campaign for a second EU referendum. He thinks remaining in the EU is a good idea. Mind you, he also thinks HS2 is a good idea. His solution to Britain's transport problem is to pour thousands more commuters into London each day by driving a new railway 100 yards wide through some of the most beautiful English countryside, demolishing properties and farms and blighting thousands of homes. And to what end? To cut 20 minutes off the time from London to Brum. The Adonis cure for our housing shortage is equally brutal, to concrete over half of southern England, plonking a million new homes in a vast arc from Oxford to Cambridge. He is one of those people who is entirely driven by the notion of 'growth', who genuinely cannot understand that most of us would rather spend 20 minutes longer on the train than rip up a single ancient forest. The 'growth' brigade's only strategy is to lay more concrete, erect more buildings and allow Britain's population to grow to 80 or 100 million. There has to be a better way.

TALKING POINT

Companies are never really at our service

IT baffles me why these departments are called Customer Service as that seems to be the last thing they do. I called recently regarding a delivery I was expecting – to replace a damaged item. This was due to be picked up and a new one delivered.

I had called once to report the item as damaged. Twenty minutes later after trying to get to the appropriate department and listening to irritating music while the girl with the annoying voice said "Your call is important to us, we appreciate your patience etc, etc", I hung up.

Companies are always very careful to say your call is being recorded. Is that just in case you hurl abuse down the phone?

Anyway, when I had a bit more time I tried again. Eventually after going through the list of options, none of which suited my query – option 3 then option 5 and back to option 2, aagh! – I opted for the sales line, knowing that would be the one most likely to be answered. Five minutes later I actually spoke to a PERSON! She told me it wasn't really the correct department but she would put me through to the right one. I begged her "Please don't let me be holding on for so long" and she assured me I would be put straight through. I still had to wait five minutes!

Finally the annoying music – played so loud you have to hold the phone away from your ear – stopped and a woman answered. I gave her my order number, name, address, postcode etc and she tracked me down on the computer. She was very sorry and a replacement would be sent and the damaged one picked up.

The following week, I received a text saying one company would collect my damaged parcel but no mention of delivering the new one. Back on the phone – this was a drawer unit for the bedroom and, having removed the old one, I was fed up of piles of clothes all over the floor.

Again I was passed around only to be told the new one would be delivered by another company. Delivery day came and went but no replacement item, although the old one had gone from the car port.

Next morning at 8.05, minutes after the department opened, I rang to complain. I explained that nothing had arrived. They claimed they had tried to deliver it but no-one was in so they left a card. Rubbish! My son and two builders were there and no card was put through the door.

But don't worry, it would arrive and I would get something as a 'goodwill' gesture. Eventually it did turn up, dumped by the front door in full view of the street. Goodwill gesture? You guessed it – nothing – but then again I would have been happy to just sort out the problem at my first attempt. Customer service? You must be joking! SUE ATTWATER

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On song for good causes to the tune of £1,200

WILLENHALL Singers were in concert on Saturday November 18, we hope our audience enjoyed our concert and our guests the Walsall Brass Band.

We raised a total of £1,200 at the concert for our charity, local branches of Dementia Care and the Alzheimer's Society.

We would like to thank everyone who supported us from the local areas of New Invention, Short Heath, Bloxwich, Willenhall and Wednesfield and further afield.

The choir had a wonderful time and enjoyed performing for you. So thank you to the organisers, the choir, our MD and accompanist and everyone who helped behind the scenes or donated raffle prizes and refreshments.

Well done everyone!

Following this we have been out and about carol singing and were amazed at the generosity of shoppers in Wednesfield Sainsbury's and Wolverhampton Asda for their kind donations.

We also thank Sainsbury's and Asda for allowing us into their stores to entertain the shoppers and help to raise funds.

The final cheque was presented on Thursday 14th December at a concert in St John's church Wolverhampton for £2,220 to the Alzheimer's Society and dementia care.

We would like to thank everyone in our local area who gave so generously to this charity.

PAM PROFFITT
Chairman - Willenhall Singers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Walsall Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
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Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL
walsall.chron@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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A good pub has unique social role

DRY January? No-one can condone excessive drinking and for many people, including Camra friends of mine, 'dry' January will provide a sensible pause. However there is another side to this story.

It is two years since the Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies, proposed a limit so minimal it would place reasonable, responsible drinkers well into the excessive consumption zone.

However, it is now acknowledged that pubs can provide the social contact necessary to promote well-being and mental health. Personally I know of no better tonic than a good pub. The greatest social centre ever devised is the traditional British local. It can accommodate a quiet read of the E&S, a pub game, a conversation, a debate and sometimes an instant party.

A great leveller of race and class, it is a place where excessive consumption is monitored by management and by peers.

Unlike drinking at home.

KEITH WATKINS
Walsall

Merging surgeries will be detrimental

A SCHEME has been proposed to merge a number of surgeries in Walsall and resite them in a new building near to the Arboretum junction. This over-centralisation will mean that patients attending the Limes Surgery and the one at Sycamore House will have much further to travel and will find inadequate parking when they get there.

For those who depend on public transport, particularly the elderly, it will make access to what will be a less patient-friendly venue much more difficult. I do not believe that the premises at the existing surgeries and the Lichfield Street surgery are so inadequate that this plan should be implemented. The cost of the proposed new building will be enormous and to waste money on such an idea when the NHS is desperately short of cash seems senseless.

JOHN LESTER
Walsall

Is football managing to survive?

ONE of the best parts of the festive season has been the time to enjoy attending or viewing the wide choice of football over the holidays.

Thousands travel across the country to support their teams. Hours are spent on channel searches for that special match. Well done to all the players and fans who play and attend local football too.

England's national sport? There is so much enjoyment and passion. Sadly there is also complacency in football.

The managers roundabout is harming English football. Managers such as Pulis, Pardew, Allardyce, Redknap, to name but a few ricochet from club to club.

It would be better to cultivate younger managers from lower leagues. Give new names a chance. Encourage talent.

Time for a change in football management and at directors-level policies. Saving cash on untried less expensive managers may also allow fans to pay less at the turnstiles.

CLLR DOUG JAMES
Walsall

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Teenagers locked up for Co-op robbery

TWO teenagers brandishing a gun and an axe threatened a terrified shop assistant before escaping with a swag of cash, cigarettes and alcohol, a court heard.

By Marion Brennan

The pair, who were both 16 at the time, have been locked up for the 'well-planned, well-oiled' robbery at the Co-op store in Tipton last March.

A third youth, who carried a knife, is still at large.

The gang jumped on to the counter at the Upper Church Lane branch and ordered the lone assistant to open the tills. One of them pointed the gun in the face of the employee who was so panic-stricken, he held open a carrier bag – used to deposit the cash – for the robbers.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard how the shop was not busy. They also went with a change of clothing and covered their faces, said Mr Walter Bealby, prosecuting.

But the two defendants, who cannot be named because of their ages, were arrested just five days later after one was spotted outside their former school with a knife identical to that used in the the raid.

Clothing found dumped near the Co-op by an employee contained DNA which also incriminated them.

CCTV footage played to the court showed the gang entering the shop just after 8.30pm on March 23. At least £300 cash was taken.

The pair, from West Bromwich, each pleaded guilty to robbery. The younger of the two, who also admitted possessing an offensive weapon, was sentenced to 41 months in a youth offender institution. His accomplice, who also admitted possessing a firearm with intent to cause fear, was sentenced to 32 months detention.

Smile for Joel gets a royal seal of approval

The Duchess with her Smile for Joel wristband

PROUDLY holding up a Smile for Joel wristband, the Duchess of Cornwall has given a royal seal of approval to the Black Country organisation.

The fundraising charity was set up by Suzy Evans and her son Owen Richards after their family was torn apart by the 2015 beach terror attack in Tunisia.

Suzy's teenage son Joel Richards, aged 19, her brother Adrian Evans, 49, and father Patrick, 78, all died while on holiday together.

Tens of thousands of pounds have been raised by Smile for Joel since its inception.

Dozens of celebrities have thrown their backing behind the group's efforts – with the Duchess the latest.

A Smile for Joel statement says: "Thank you to everyone for all your amazing wristband pictures.

"For our last one for 2017, we would like to share a special one. Thank you to HRH the Duchess of Cornwall."

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Woman spared jail after grandfather 'terrified'

A WOMAN who forced her naked grandfather to jump 15 feet to the ground, breaking his leg, has been spared jail.

Jade Brindley was armed with a cricket bat which was used to smash her way into the Burntwood home of Geoffrey Witton, a judge heard.

The 29-year-old held a grudge against him after an alleged incident involving her mother Sharon who subsequently stabbed him and is now serving a 14-year jail sentence, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Mother-of-four Brindley shouted to him from outside but he had not seen her for many years and failed to recognise the woman, said Mr Tariq Shakoor, prosecuting. She had sent a text message to a friend saying she was going to confront her grandfather after 'losing everything,' continued the prosecutor.

Mr Witton phoned a relative as the defendant broke glass in the back door to gain access when refused entry at 7am on July 29. Mr Shakoor said: "He was naked and climbed out of the bathroom window onto a roof and, when he heard her coming up the stairs, jumped 15 feet onto concrete, feet first. He was terrified."

Mr Witton fractured his leg in two places and, said in a statement, he suffered flashbacks of the incident.

Brindley, from Eremon Close, Rugeley, admitted possession of an offensive weapon and taking revenge on the basis she had not intended to cause injury and could not have foreseen her grandfather would jump.

The defendant had spent six months in custody on remand after her arrest and, Miss Alison Downs, representing her, said: "Her life had fallen apart."

Brindley, who was freed on bail last month, now has supervised access to the children every fortnight and is drug free, the court heard. She was given a 20 month jail term suspended for two years.

Rock night raises MS cash

Chris Plumbly, front left, with organiser Doddy White along with musicians Blade Edwards, back left, and Connor Emms from the band New Saints

MORE than £1,000 was raised for charity in a rock 'n' roll event.

More than 100 people filled the Duke of Cambridge pub, Coltham Road, Willenhall, to listen to different acoustic rock performers throughout the afternoon.

The money went to MS Society in the Black Country – a group of local people suffering with the neurological condition, their family, friends and carers who support one another.

Landlord Chris Plumbly, aged 58, from Willenhall, suffers with MS himself.

He said: "I was working behind the bar but it was absolutely brilliant. There were quite a few people in and out the door, it was an absolutely cracking atmosphere. For a small backstreet pub for one afternoon, I was very pleased with the money we raised."

The event was staged from 4 to 10pm and was arranged by Doddy White of Facebook fan group Rockers Through the Ages.

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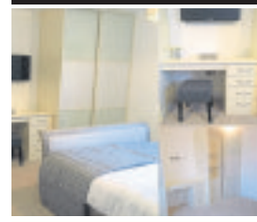

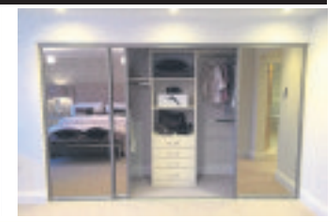

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Charity's record year as 125 greyhounds saved

A DOG charity is celebrating a record year after it announced it had rehomed 125 greyhounds during 2017.

Aldridge-based Bark Inn Kennels has seen a major surge in the number of people looking to give rescue dogs a new home, with bosses keen to build on this success by breaking the 150 mark over the next 12 months.

Backed by Wolverhampton-based C&D Consultancy, the organisation takes in retired greyhounds and lurchers, with each space costing them £800 per year for accommodation, vet bills and food.

Founder Michelle Owen said: "In 2016 we managed to rehome 92 dogs and we thought that was an amazing achievement. We had reached that figure by October and have gone on to add another 30 plus.

Greyhounds

"There definitely seems a move from buying puppies to instead looking at rehoming dogs and I'm sure our move to our current site in Aldridge has also made us more visible."

She continued: "Finally, we have really benefited from the backing of John Woodward at C&D Consultancy.

"Not only has he rehomed two greyhounds for us, but has also put on numerous fundraising events to raise money and even donated a van to help with transporting our dogs around."

Bark Inn Kennels was established in 2009 by Michelle and has grown into one of the largest greyhound rehoming centres in the West Midlands.

The management team is supported by 10 volunteers, who help with dog walking and looking after the kennels.

At Bark Inn, Cheryl Jones, Michelle Owen, Juls Farnsworth and Lorella Greenhill

It also offers overnight boarding, which helps generate important funds for the rehoming service.

"We made the announcement during our Kennel Walk on New Year's Day, which attracted more than 100 people and their dogs. It was a great way to start 2018 and we hope that all the interest in what we do will see more beautiful animals given loving homes in the future," said Michelle.

C&D's John Woodward said: "You can't help but be impressed with what they achieve at Bark Inn Kennels, especially with the small team involved. They even slept in the kennels with the dogs during the recent cold spell to make sure they were okay.

"Michelle is always looking for more volunteers and other businesses to support them. They're rehomed more than 600 dogs so far and it won't be long until they hit the magical 1,000 mark." For further information go online to www.barkinnkennels.co.uk or follow @barkinnkennels on Twitter.

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Ex-Goodyear workers in donations

Cyril Barrett, Barrie Malia, and Mark Jenkins, with equipment they have donated, at Green Park School, Bilston

Charities urged to get in touch for projects help

FORMER Goodyear workers who have funded a host of charity projects across the Black Country are looking for more good causes to support.

A pot of money is available from the 5/344 Transport and General Workers Union Benevolent Fund to benefit registered charities that are helping vulnerable people in our communities.

Cyril Barrett, who worked at the tyre plant for almost 40 years, said they are looking to create a 'living legacy' to the shopfloor workers who donated to the fund over the years.

They have already supported 25 different projects during the past 12 months and Mr Barrett said they were now keen to hear from other charities that believe they too could benefit from the fund.

"We still have some money left and we would be delighted to help other charities that are helping the most vulnerable people in the community in Wolverhampton and the Black Country," he added. To be considered for support, organisations must be registered charities. The group does not hand out cash donations but will instead purchase vital equipment or other items that will benefit their work.

A recent example of this saw the former Goodyear employees handover £2,000 worth of outdoor toys for pupils at Broadmeadow Special School in Wolverhampton in November.

Charities can send details of their project to heather.large@expressandstar.co.uk and details will be forwarded on to the group for consideration.

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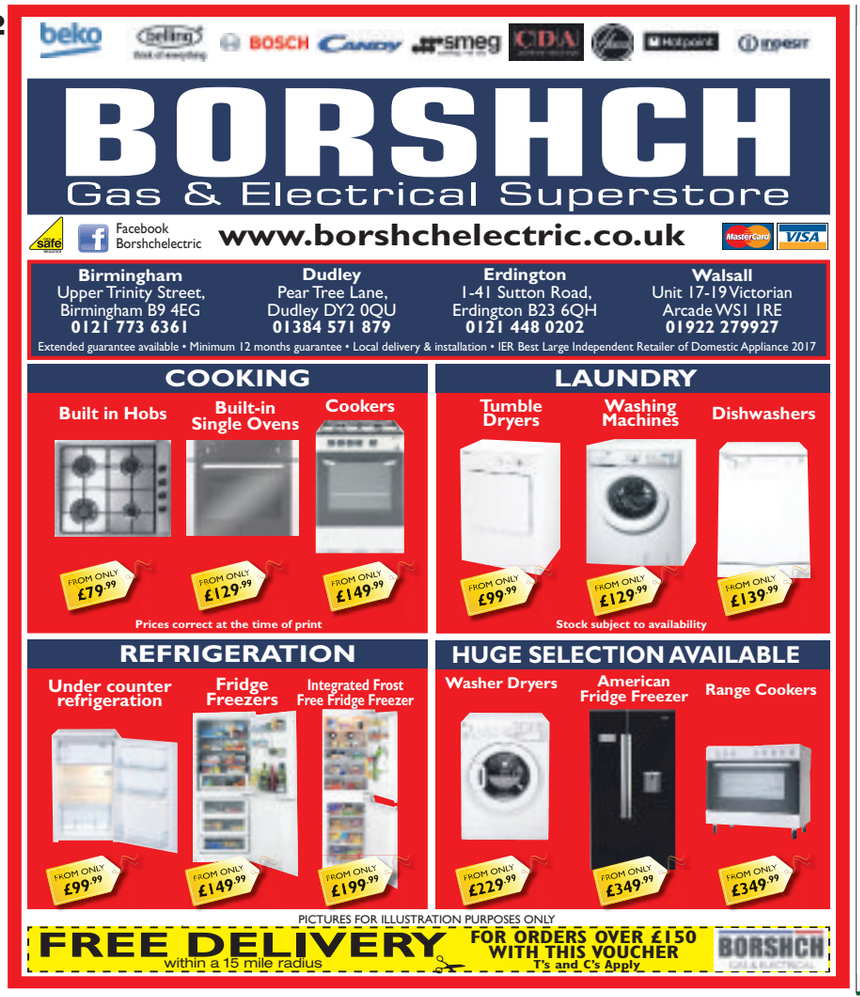
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Geoff's tribute to Forces charity after sight loss

"I KNOW I've got a lot to look forward to this year because despite my sight loss I'm a true soldier. I never say I'm defeated."

Army veteran Geoff Deaney has come out fighting after losing his sight and the 70-year-old has paid tribute to the charity that helped him overcome many of the challenges and learn new activities and skills.

Geoff, from Bentley in Walsall started receiving support from Blind Veterans UK this time last year.

He said: "Finding out I would become blind was a real kick to the stomach. But over the past year Blind Veterans UK have proven to me that there is still a lot to be excited about.

"It's been a fantastic year and I looking forward to seeing what 2018 has to offer."

Geoff Deaney with his son Andy

Geoff before his first parachute jump

Posted

Geoff joined the 3rd Batallion Parachute Regiment (3 PARA) in 1963. During his 24-year career in the Army Geoff served in Australia, Canada, Malta, Germany and Northern Ireland. He was also deployed to the South Atlantic during the Falklands War. He said: "My dad was in the RAF and so when I was younger we travelled with him wherever he was posted. I think that's what gave me a taste for Forces life."

Geoff was discharged as a Warrant Officer in 1987 and went on to work in security. He began to lose his sight due to macular degeneration around seven years ago.

"First I noticed that I was having real trouble reading, and then I had to stop driving because it was too dangerous. Now I rely entirely on my peripheral vision because I can't see anything out of the centre of my eyes."

Geoff was registered severely sight impaired in 2016 and referred to Blind Veterans UK by Wolverhampton Eye Hospital. Soon afterwards, he attended an introduction week at one of the charity's rehabilitation centres in Llandudno.

"It's ironic but that week at the Blind Veterans UK centre was a real eye opener," he said. "I took part in all sorts of activities that I never thought you could do if you were blind – like archery! I also met some inspirational blind veterans who showed me how much can be achieved if you set your mind to it."

Geoff has also received regular visits at home from one of the charity's dedicated community support workers. He has been given equipment like a one-cup kettle to help him avoid scalds, and a mobile phone with voice command so that he can call his friends independently.

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New £1m factory is taking shape

Accord is moving from Beechdale to a 56,000 sq ft facility in Aldridge, with production to start in the spring

1,000 timber homes per year target at premises

A £1 MILLION factory where thousands of timber-framed homes will be built is taking shape in Walsall.

Accord will move 25 staff from Beechdale to a new 56,000 sq ft manufacturing facility in Aldridge.

Alan Yates, executive commercial director at Accord, said: "We have ambitious plans for our new factory, which is now under construction and which will enable us to increase annual production to over 1,000 homes per year."

Once working to its full capacity the new factory will need around 60 extra workers. Mr Yates added: "We are experiencing real growth in the business by working in partnership with other housing associations and local authorities across the country.

"Accord is investing over £1 million in developing the new factory, including high-value manufacturing equipment, and we will be able to both meet future orders and create more jobs for local people too." The LoCaL Homes factory in Aldridge will go into production in the spring and, in addition to manufacturing more homes, the new factory will also manufacture additional products and components. Dr Chris Handy, Chief Executive of Accord, said: "With this amazing new factory facility, we will be able to commence manufacture of our own windows and our new "H-pod" – an integrated kitchen and bathroom unit that will sit within the panelised structure. Our investment has been enhanced by grant funding provided by the Black Country LEP and the Homes and Community Agency, and supported by Walsall Council."

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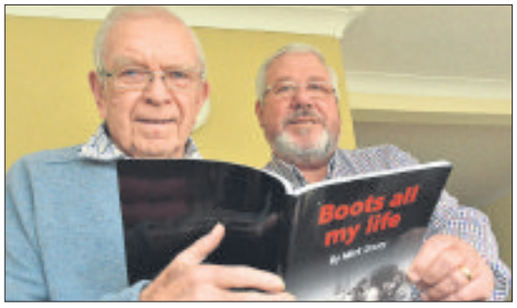
Mick working as a safety officer down the pit



Mick Drury with Councillor Alan Dean at book launch

Eastern Europeans waiting to go down the mine

The mines rescue team at Valley Colliery

The pits? No I loved it says ex-miner Mick

IT was a job worked in darkness and surrounded by danger. But for ex-miner-turned-author Mick Drury it was the best job ever.

And now the 81-year-old from Hednesford has released his memoirs of more than 30 years spent at Littleton Colliery, in the village of Huntington.

The colliery closed in 1993 and was the last working coal mine on the Cannock Chase Coalfield. Mick's book, aptly entitled 'Boots All My Life', tells tales of his daily life as a miner and includes fascinating images of his time down the pit.

He said: "I look back with such fond memories despite it being hard work. We were moving 22 tonne of coal a day. I never realised that everyday that was happening. There was great comaraderie and the humour in the pits kept us going. I went all through working on the coalface.

"Boots All My Life will now be my

MEMORY LANE

Report by Clare Butler

10th book. Among the others, I have written about the coal board and community life in ex-army barrack huts, which I had to do a lot of research on, but this is my memories about my time at the colliery."

Mick could easily have seen his future guided in another path away from the coalface had it not been for the death of his father.

Redundant

"I started in the mines straight after I finished school in 1951," he said. "I was originally going to work as a printer but my father died in an accident. It left my brother and mother at home without a penny, so I thought I can't let this go on.

"I went down to the pit and got a job within a week."

Mick said from that moment on the only time he was not down the pit was when he was in the Army as a mechanic for three years until 1989.

"I was made redundant in 1989 but I still see a lot of people I know around the town," he said. "I have kept in touch with most of the men who used to work there, despite some of them sadly passing on now, but we still try to have our gatherings."

The book has taken 16 years to write, on and off, before finally making it to publication. It was originally to be left just to Mick's family and was never intended to be put out for the public to enjoy.

"Back in the 70s I met with an author from Hednesford who said that I should write down about my time at the mines," added Mick. "Then, in 2001, I formed the Mining Society in Cannock Chase and realised that I had come across books about different mines but there was nothing about Cannock.

Boots All My Life is available from Councillor Alan Dean on 01543 275638. The cover price is £14 or £10 for members of the Mining Society.

Mick giving a demonstration in 2010

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Police release CCTV image to track down masked robber

The CCTV image

A MASKED robber armed with a hammer stole thousands of pounds from a post office last month. West Midlands police are now appealing for information to find the man who was wearing a black balaclava when he robbed the branch on Wolverhampton Road.

The incident happened at 8.10am on November 26 and police have released an image of the offender from CCTV footage. He is wearing a black balaclava as well as a black jumper with a hood that has a green and red emblem on the left side.

It is believed the culprit is a white man aged in his early 20s from the local area. He threatened a staff member working at the store and stole several thousand pounds in cash and cigarettes. Anyone with information has been asked to call police on 101 quoting crime number 20WS/255876R/17 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Factory shops boost butcher Crawshaw's performance as sales up by 0.6 per cent

VALUE butchers group Crawshaw, which has sites in Bilston, Cannock and West Bromwich, saw sales rise 0.6 per cent for the 15 weeks to Christmas Eve.

The performance was underpinned by the strength of the growing factory shop format, including one at Dudley Street, West Bromwich, which helped to offset the impact of lower footfall on the high street.

Group sales in the week leading up to Christmas reached a record £1.8 million and almost 3,500 meat hampers sold. It opened two more new factory shop units in the 15 weeks to complete the five planned for 2017 taking the total to 10 factory shops within the 54-shop estate.

The factory shops accounting for a quarter of group sales in the period.

A partnership with the Birmingham-based 2Sisters Food Group is progressing well with core poultry supply routes well established and a framework for successful new product category tests landing over the festive period.

Crawshaw is looking to expand this type of activity to increase the basket spend of existing customers and to attract new customers.

Chief executive Noel Collett said: "On balance, this was a solid core Christmas trading performance against what remains a very tough high street environment. Our biggest ever Christmas week and the record number of meat hampers sold clearly demonstrates the trust our customers place in us for their most important meat spend of the year. This gives us a solid platform to improve trading momentum going into 2018. We continue to focus on strengthening Crawshaw's position as the country's best value butcher. We are excited by the performance of our factory shops and by the progress of our 2Sisters supply agreement and, while there is much to do, we remain confident that this combination will be transformational for the long-term growth of the company."

The opening of the 2.600 sq ft factory shop in West Bromwich in June 2016 created 20 jobs.

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Manor Farm, a community at heart!

Commercial feature

January 2018 sees Manor Farm Community Association kick off the year celebrating a whopping 41 years of providing a wide range of much needed quality services and activities for the people of Walsall!

Registered as a charity way back in January 1977, the organisation has justifiably established an enviable reputation as a top provider of community provision for people of all ages.

Gary Bird, chief executive of the charity for 34 years, says the aim of the charity is really simple – to do all it can to make life better for each and every member of the community in any way possible. In practice this has resulted in the development of a wide and multi-faceted range of 'cradle to the grave' services for Walsall people.

Services now include childcare and activities for children and young adults, vocational and recreational adult education opportunities, leisure and sporting facilities and activities, social and conference facilities and much, much more from its four main sites of delivery across Rushall and Pelsall.

With over 4,000 users a week the charity continues to expand its services and with much needed support and funding from the BIG lottery, the charity in particular has increased its provision for the ever-increasing number of older, isolated and vulnerable people in our society who need help to improve their lives wherever possible.

By providing a 'one-stop Silver Service', Gary said the charity aims to help to keep older people happy and healthy and living in their own homes, out of hospital and residential care. Gary paid tribute to the fantastic support the charity receives from a dedicated team of long serving trustees, staff and, more recently from the growing army of incredible volunteers, without whom, the charity just couldn't do what it does on a daily basis. He said: "Our volunteers really do a tremendous job out there in the community and they really do make a positive difference to people's lives."

So what does 2018 have in store?

Work will soon commence on two new initiatives for the new year; first up is a state-of-the-art £250,000 floodlit 3G soccer training facility and changing rooms that will be built at the Manor Farm Centre and ready for the summer and use by the hundreds of local adult and children's football teams.

That will be closely followed by the refurbishment and reopening of the recently closed Rushall Library which is planned to be a community charity shop, tea room and information centre!

Gary already has his mind set on the next big project for the charity – the redevelopment of the derelict swimming pool at Manor Farm although he's not exactly sure what for yet.

Whatever it turns out to be it certainly looks like Manor Farm Community Association will be around for some time!

Getting to grips with fitness in the gym

Gary Bird, Manor Farm Community Association chief executive

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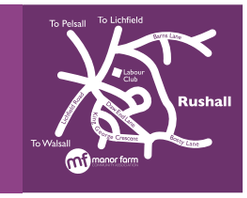

Police lagging behind crime detection rates

MORE than three quarters of all crimes recorded by police in the Black Country result in no action being taken, shocking new figures have revealed.

And in almost six out of 10 cases officers fail to even identify a suspect, according to official data from West Midlands Police.

The figures show that WMP is lagging behind when it comes to detection rates, with other forces in the country proving far better when it comes to identifying suspects. Walsall North Conservative MP Eddie Hughes said that victims were being let down and added: "The disparity between the performance of forces proves that this can't just be about money."

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said a lack of resources was having a negative impact on the force's ability to fight crime.

Lack of resources – Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson

Suspects

An investigation by the Chronicle's sister paper, the Express & Star shows that in the four Black Country boroughs 86,194 crimes were reported to police between December 2016 and November 2017.

But in 65,490 of cases (75.98 per cent) the force took no further action, while 58.6 per cent of reports saw no suspect being identified by officers. In Dudley police took no further action when dealing with more than four out of every five recorded crimes (81.41 per cent), and failed to establish the identity of a suspect 63.32 per cent of the time. Sandwell's 'no action' rate was 79.29 per cent, with 61 per cent of reported crimes involving no suspect being identified.

Meanwhile in Walsall officers took no action in 78.5 per cent of cases (16,521 of 21,152), with 60.78 per cent ending without the identification of a suspect.

The situation was slightly better in Wolverhampton, where police took action on 35.27 per cent of 20,426 crimes. However, no suspect was identified in 49.37 per cent of all reported crimes in the city. Other forces posted far lower 'no suspect' figures. In West Mercia it was 45 per cent, while the figure for Staffordshire Police was 41 per cent. Across the country 4.2 million crimes were recorded by police forces over the same period, with suspects identified in 48 per cent of cases.

Walsall North MP Mr Hughes said he plans to write to Mr Jamieson requesting a 'detailed explanation' of the performance of the region's force.

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Vintage dogs on lookout for 'forever home'

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

THE message at this time of year for anyone receiving a puppy as a gift is 'A Dog is for Life – not just for Christmas' and this should be heeded by everyone – animals are not to be treated as presents that can be returned once the recipient gets tired of them.

However, there are some dogs available this festive season who won't need much looking after and are proving very popular with the gift hunters – they are the vintage collectable models made by Sylvac!

Sylvac models were very much sought after in their heyday (the thirties, forties and fifties) but were not so in more recent years.

However, they are making their way back onto the antiques centres' shelves and catching the eye of collectors.

Sylvac has been in business since the Victorian era but it was in the 1930s that their animal figurines really caught the public eye.

Dogs and rabbits were the best sellers, along with some rather evil looking cats, and many breeds of dogs were replicated in model form.

The models were made in various colours, green and orange being the most memorable although you can find the occasional pink-glazed dog!

There is a good deal of Sylvac around but that doesn't mean it isn't collectable, prices are very reasonable and there is definitely an increasing market for these pieces.

And of course there are many other dog figures to choose from as festive gifts if you're buying for a dog lover, also look out for those made by Royal Doulton, Beswick and Staffordshire.

So you CAN give a loving home to a dog this Christmas – just make sure it's a model unless you're buying a real one for keeps!

The Old Mill Antiques Centre, in Mill Street, Low Town, Bridgnorth is open seven days a week from 10am until 5pm.

This year, for the first time ever, we are opening for late-night festive shopping until 8pm every Wednesday until Christmas and Charlie's Tea Rooms will be open at the same time.

There is free parking for customers.

Themes used to celebrate the big occasions

Themed – a tartan Christmas table

CHRISTMAS is over, decorations are down and packed neatly into boxes ready for next year's celebrations.

I seem to have an extra box every year, new candles, contemporary decorations, additional lights and baubles. Incredible really, more money spent every season.

We theme our Christmas day, in 2016 it was 1920s gold and black, this last one was tartan, so the newest box is filled with Royal Stewart bunting, Mackintosh ribbons, a stag's head and more.

Looking on my Facebook feed this process is not unusual, the shops were full of cushion covers, table decorations, crockery and bedding in varied ideas and concepts to get your creativity going, festive knitwear and matching family outfits incredibly popular for all.

It isn't just Christmas, I'm sure New Year's Eve arrangements are also organised by theme and I know Easter, stag and hen parties, baby showers and weddings are harmonised by an idea or style.

These themes cost, every detail is an expense and there is no end of buyers ready to spend, even those on a tight budget.

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis

It is a modern-day concept, our homes co-ordinate by colour, tone and highlight and we change them as the newest trends feature on the high street.

This coming spring pretty, jewelled intense brights and iridescent, pearlized metallic are the order of the day, old English library, fonts and letter artwork, travel and culture, brickwork and upcycling everything.

Pantone have announced their colour of the year as ultra violet, described as a celestial shade of purple. Expect to see it in our homes and on our clothes and accessories and it may even feature on your Christmas tree in December.

We will see pretty, outdoor florals and hand drawn prints on our garments, rusty art and bright vegetation greens teamed with subtle neutrals.

Basic design will no longer be popular, new shapes, sculptural design and unusual pattern cutting will be seen in most garments and the trend towards genderless style will continue and grow.

Hair will be dripping locks of Rapunzel's waves, slicked back with a centre parting or chopped boyish cuts and dyed to shades of soft pink, headpieces galore.

Lips red or hot pink, accentuated cheekbones, smudged lids and eyes black and scattered with a glittery finish.

The new year brings all these current, fashionable concepts, endless resolutions, a newly planned life, a thrill for what is ahead.

There is so much on offer to us both informative, thought provoking and material that our personalities positively glow with the new possibilities before us.

The excitement of the festive season is over for another year and 2018 has arrived.

Be positive, happy and enjoy everything that is new and exciting.

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Experts suggest slurping down six to eight glasses of water daily

A good night's sleep will replenish your body – so turn off your mobile phone

Reclaim body and mind after festive excesses

Too much wine can cause a puffy face

FEELING bloated, broke and battered by the festive party season? Join the club... Christmas is well and truly over – and now all there is to look forward to is a cold, dark and dry January.

By Anna Williamson

But you don't need to battle through the first painful weeks of 2018 with an unshakeable hangover. We asked some health experts for their top tips for a January refresh.

Here's how to reclaim your body and mind after the festive excess...

Say goodbye to wine face

Waking up with a puffy face and dark circles under your eyes from too many glasses of vino was likely a familiar sight in December. Now that party season is over, it can take time for our skin to recover from excess wine and fizz. "Alcohol affects your skin in many ways," says dermatologist Dr Justine Hextall from The Harley Street Medical Group. "Keeping hydrated and applying an antioxidant eye serum will help with noticeable eye bags," she advises.

For a cheaper and more holistic approach, nutritionist Christine Bailey suggests loading up on lunchtime watermelon to give skin a January boost. "Like berries, watermelon is a fabulous source of potent antioxidants," she says.

Banish the bloat

You've devoured the mince pies and gobbled too much turkey. It was fun at the time, but now you've started to resemble Father Christmas with a festive bloated belly. Rob Hobson, head of nutrition at Healthspan, explains: "A poor diet can mess with the balance of bacteria in your gut, which can cause bloating." He suggests sipping on mint tea after eating. Not only does it ease digestion, but it will relax the gut wall and relieve excess gas.

Invest in your emotional wellbeing

Being cooped up in close quarters with family, with mountains of washing up and too much booze on the go, can get pretty stressful at the best of times. When January comes around, your emotional health may need as much of a boost as your body. Healthspan psychologist, Dr Meg Arroll, believes that at the start of the year, is important to take some time out for you. "The festive period can leave you mentally and emotionally drained. Engage in activities such as diaphragmatic breathing, yoga, Tai Chi, meditation and mindfulness to combat a chronic stress state."

Give your gut flora a boost

You've beaten the bloat, so now it's time to give your gut a boost and keep your microbiome in check. "Too much stress and too many late nights can put your gut bacteria out of balance, which can lead to reduced immunity and make you more susceptible to winter bugs," says Helen Bond, a dietitian from ProVen Probiotics. She suggests improving your microflora by eating fermented foods such as and kimchi, sauerkraut, and fermented milk drinks like kefir.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate

You might be undertaking dry January, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't keep a glass beside you all day. "Drinking alcohol dehydrates your body, causing your kidneys to send water straight to your bladder, instead of being absorbed into the body," says Dr Anshu Bhagat. Christine recommends counteracting this by slurping down six to eight glasses of water daily.

Get some Zzzs

Between work parties, festive drinks and train journeys to far-flung relatives, there isn't much time for replenishing shut-eye. "Try a cup of warm Montmorency cherry juice before bed to help you wind down for a long night's sleep," says Christine. "The juice contains one of the few food sources of melatonin – our sleep hormone."

Conwoman is jailed for stealing pension money

A WOMAN who stole a pensioner's food and heating cash after tricking her way into her home has been jailed for three years.

Selina Spencer knocked at the 67-year-old's bungalow in Wolverhampton asking for a pen and paper in March last year, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

When the victim turned her back to fetch the items, 32-year-old Spencer 'barged her way' into the property in Woodcross, near Coseley, and asked for a carrier bag, said Mr Mark Phillips, prosecuting.

Selina Spencer

While the pensioner was in the kitchen, Spencer slipped into the living room and stole £120 from a purse on the table. When the older woman returned, Spencer fled. The victim was forced to ask her family for help as the amount stolen, her pension money, was all she had to live on for the week. She said the theft had knocked her confidence. She was fearful Spencer would return.

The pensioner was described as 'being confused sometimes' which made her vulnerable. She lived in a row of bungalows occupied mainly by the elderly and Spencer would have known that, which was why she was in the area, claimed Mr Phillips.

Spencer, who lives with her partner on wasteground in Bilston, was picked up after being identified by CCTV cameras. She admitted robbery and was already known to officers as a drug addict with a history of past offending to fund her habit. She had accumulated 16 convictions for 68 offences since 1999, with burglaries and shoplifting featuring increasingly over the past decade.

Defending Spencer, Mr Jon Roe said following her last prison release on licence, she had stayed free of drugs for 11 months but then lapsed.

Molineux farewell to Foz

Danny Batth leads out Foz's family and, inset, John Hendley

WOLVES players paid an emotional tribute to long-serving club employee John 'Foz' Hendley, whose death has left many at the club he loved devastated.

Crowds and players at Molineux bid farewell to him on Saturday at their FA Cup fixture against Swansea City. Mr Hendley died recently, aged 67, and a host of past and present players, managers and staff members have paid tribute.

A video tribute was played before kick-off showing pictures and clips of him throughout the years – including holding various trophies and being presented a celebration cake on the pitch.

Pictures also showed the long-serving fan with former boss Mick McCarthy, Noel and Liam Gallagher, and also playing football. Foz had been a Wolves fan since he was 15-years-old and had long been affiliated with the club in a variety of roles. He officially joined Wolves in 1999 working with the club's media team including on the match-day programme.

Foz was said to be a regular at every Wolves game, home or away, and attended the club's recent win at Bristol City.

He was also a keen historian of the club and many supporters will remember him from videos the club produced in the 1990s.

Current and former captains Danny Batth and Jody Craddock joined Foz's family in laying wreaths behind each goal.The ground then took part in a moment's applause.

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Young actors get their chance

A SEARCH for undiscovered talent starts when the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain heads to Birmingham in February as part of a nationwide sweep.

Successful applicants will join a celebrated company of talented individuals, following in the footsteps of various alumni.

They include Helen Mirren, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Daniel Craig, Matt Smith and Birmingham's own Sope Dirisu, title role star of the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2017 production of Coriolanus.

This year, acting auditions will take place at MAC Birmingham on February 24 and 25 and backstage interviews will take place at The Old Rep Theatre on February 17 and 18. Following auditions at Mac Birmingham for NYT's Intake Acting Course, successful applicants aged 14-17 will gain a space on NYT's Junior Acting Course; successful applicants aged 18-25 will join NYT's three-week senior acting course.

Speeches should be from a published play and learned by heart.

Driver in tree crash banned after shandies

A DRINK-DRIVER crashed his car into a tree injuring himself and two passengers after only consuming 'two shandies' the previous night.

Robby Hanson had been driving his friends back from a night out in Walsall town centre when he lost control of the Renault Megane, claiming it was because of ice on the road, around 3.11am on Sunday, December 17.

They sustained bruises and cuts to the head Walsall Magistrates' Court heard. A member of the public helped and made sure they got to Walsall Manor Hospital for treatment where police caught up with Hanson, aged 31, of Southbourne Avenue, Alumwell.

He admitted being the driver of the vehicle and blew a positive breath test before being taken to Bloxwich police station where his alcohol level was officially recorded to be 57 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath – above the legal limit of 35 microgrammes.

Hanson claimed he had been drinking heavy on the previous Friday without eating much but told officers he had only had two shandies on Saturday night whilst drinking at a pub prior to his friends asking him if he could pick them up.

It emerged at court that he had previous convictions for failing to provide a specimen and drink driving.

Copious

Hanson admitted the latest charge of driving a motor vehicle when alcohol levels were above the limit. Magistrates fined him £120 and handed him a £30 surcharge and £135 in court costs.

While they gave him a maximum driving disqualification for 40 months because the offence led to a crash which led to people being injured.

Speaking in his defence Brij Chaudhry said: "He had copious amounts to drink on the Friday but had not driven the previous day.

"On Saturday evening at a pub he had two shandies and goes home to see his dad. He received a phone call from friends who were out asking if he could give them a lift.On his way back from picking them up there were icy road conditions.

"He loses control and collides into a tree. There is no suggestion of bad driving."

Ex-Israeli soldier on song for Glee Club

Singer Irit, who has released an album called Hello

ISRAELI-BORN, London-based singer-songwriter Irit is heading to Birmingham's Glee Club next month.

She is set to release her debut album Hello on February 16, ahead of her Birmingham show three days later.

Irit was previously a soldier and a sniper, as well as a stage actress in a theatre group, TV talk show host, documentary maker and a comedienne among.

Irit found her voice whilst playing with Last Of Songs, the electronic covers band from Tel Aviv, before going on to write her own songs. As she started writing her own songs, she found herself gravitating toward a more organic sound, drawing inspiration from the elaborate Middle Eastern scales and rhythms she had heard growing up.

She relocated to London in 2015 and met producer Jonathan Quarmby, who has worked on her debut album.

For further information or to book tickets go to glee.co.uk/performer/irit

Two women die after collision of car and van on motorway

TWO women have died following a crash between a car and a van, which closed part of a Midland motorway for eight hours. The crash happened on the M42 near Sutton Coldfield, in the early hours, last Friday.

Emergency services were called to the motorway between junctions nine and 10 northbound near Curdworth, at 3.20am.

An ambulance service spokeswoman said: "Sadly, it quickly became apparent that nothing could be done to save two passengers in the car, two women, and they were confirmed dead on scene."

Two men, believed to be the driver and third passenger from the car, were assessed by ambulance staff and were found to have sustained minor injuries but they did not require hospital treatment.

The male van driver sustained back pain and a hand injury in the collision. He was taken to Heartlands hospital.

The motorway reopened at 11.15am.

The van driver, a 37-year-old man from Birmingham, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs and has since been released under investigation.

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WOLVERHAMPTON MAGAZINE

Piano man looking for key to success

Playing piano at a top London hotel has won Halesowen's James Sayer some famous fans

IT'S a cliché but there's something truthful in the old saying attributed to Theodore Roosevelt: 'nothing worth having comes easy'.

Just ask James Sayer. Like countless musicians he started with a dream. To be a world-renowned artist.

He's got talent in his piano-playing fingertips. It has led to being noticed by the likes of Sir Tom Jones, Mumford & Sons' producer Matt Lawrence and The Doobie Brothers' Michael McDonald.

That's why James put faith in himself and his music by upping sticks from Halesowen and moving to the Big Smoke to chase that dream.

"I've been lucky in London," says the 29-year-old former Windsor High School and King Edward VI College in Stourbridge pupil. "I work most nights. It's still pretty tough, but I get to go all around the world and it has been amazing."

He is a full-time musician. He can count recording sessions, gigs, private parties and functions, touring band slots and being one of the resident piano players at the capital's swanky Savoy Hotel among his income streams. It is a nomadic lifestyle, and one that is not aligned to plentiful sleep.

"I'm unsigned so I pump everything in to supporting myself," he adds. "It means you've got to want it really bad. It was tough at first, but now I am lucky enough to live in a nicer area in north London.

"I am lucky enough to work full-time and all that money goes on rent or recording my own music. I was doing a private party last night for example and I didn't get back until 4.30am this morning.

Hard-working musician James Sayer

"But it's rewarding and a great feeling, I am doing what I want and it makes it easier."

Unfortunately for James, success in London does mean that he gets to see his friends and family less often. But despite living among the bright lights he hasn't forgotten his roots. When he does get the chance to play in the Midlands he does, and he has a show lined up at Jools Holland's Jam House in Birmingham on Thursday, February 8.

Comparisons

"It's nice to be able to play there," he admits. "I try and get back every six weeks or so now but it's not always possible. Hopefully all my family and friends will be piling in and it will be good to see them."

Fusing elements of blues, folk and rock in his music, playing such venues inevitably leads to comparisons with Jools himself. But that's not something James minds.

"I've been compared to him and that's fine because I love him," he laughs.

"I haven't been able to meet him yet but a couple of his musicians have played with me before and said they enjoyed it.

"I also love Van Morrison and obviously Elton John as a piano player. I also love Billy Joel's timeless music and the old soul of Ray Charles.

"There's also Michael McDonald from the band The Doobie Brothers. I've got to know him and he is in my opinion the greatest singer ever."

That's quite a claim, especially as another of the vocal greats who spotted him playing at The Savoy and asked for his details was a certain Sir Tom Jones. After a while one of his entourage approached James. "He asked for my number and said Sir Tom liked my playing style and wanted to know more about me. We exchanged details and I am hoping we can get some work done together in the near future."

Hopefully that might lead to some more international work for James, who already has some globe-trotting under his belt.

He was previously spotted by American group Ruen Brothers and played with them in 2015 at Radio 1's Big Weekend in Norwich before the huge American festivals Austin City Limits in Texas and Coachella, in Indio, California.

He has also had some successful shows further south in Brazil, where they 'love their blues and metal', while also getting plenty of airplay in Holland.

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After Laughter, we are heading to gig

Grammy Award-winners Paramore returned with their fifth album, After Laughter, in spring 2017.

The new wave group from Tennessee topped the American rock charts and enjoyed a top 10 hit in the main charts on both sides of the Atlantic as critics were dazzled.

The Observer said: 'After Laughter could be one of the year's best pop albums', the Sunday Times Culture added: 'After Laughter is a blast', NME wrote 'a pop triumph', The Sun said 'their best music in years' and DIY awarded it full marks and described it as 'perfect'.

The trio – Hayley Williams, Zac Farro and Taylor York – have returned to the UK for a five-date, whistle-stop arena tour, which reaches Arena Birmingham on Sunday.

The shows are the band's first since June last year, when they played five intimate gigs – including one at the Royal Albert Hall – to coincide with the release of After Laughter.

Having previously performed sold out shows at the O2 Arena, Wembley Arena, and co-headlined Reading & Leeds Festivals in 2014, fans are in for something special.

Their recent show at the Royal Albert Hall was a triumph with DIY writing: 'They say what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger and tonight, against the iconic backdrop of the Royal Albert Hall, Paramore prove to be at their most powerful yet'. The Evening Standard added: 'Eighties-style synths and sleek guitars ruled the night at this animated gig'. Q described it as 'perfect'.

Paramore are four-times Grammy nominees and won the Best Rock Song trophy at the 57th Annual Awards. They have long established themselves as international rock superstars.

Their previous self-titled album Paramore hit number one in the UK and US upon release, and showcased a string of blockbuster singles including two two-times RIAA platinum-certified hits, plus smashes Still Into You and Ain't It Fun.

The band has enjoyed a truly remarkable run of critically-acclaimed albums and singles since coming together in Nashville in 2004, from 2005's gold-certified debut, All We Know Is Falling and 2007's two-times platinum-certified breakthrough, RIOT! – with its three-times platinum-certified hit, Misery Business, as well as the platinum-certified singles crushcrushcrush and That's What You Get – to 2008's worldwide platinum Decode and 2009's platinum-certified Brand New Eyes and its Grammy-nominated smash, The Only Exception.

Frontwoman Hayley has grown up in the spotlight. She formed the band following the divorce of her parents, when she was 14, and signed her first record deal a year later when Atlantic snapped her up.

A poetic and sensitive lyricist, she helped the band to flourish alongside peers like My Chemical Romance and Fall Out Boy.

The band took their time over After Laughter, following the international success of their self-titled 2013 record.

Hayley says: "I didn't even know if we were going to make another record . . . There was a moment when I didn't even want it to happen. Then it was like, I want it to happen, but I don't know how we're going to do it."

The songs were written following a lengthy period of introspection by Hayley, who went into therapy. "For the first time in my life, there wasn't a pinhole of light at the end of the tunnel. I thought, I just wish everything would stop. It wasn't in the sense of, I'm going to take my life. It was just hopelessness. Like, 'What's the point?' I don't think I understood how dangerous hopelessness is. Everything hurts."

We'll be over on the first flight – Paramore are at Arena

The band were keen to make a break with the past and their re-branding involved bringing in an LA designer, Scott Cleary. He was keen to underscore the band's new sound and direction by creating an impossible trident optical illusion as the album's artwork.

"The band came to me when they were recording the album in LA. We've been friends for a while so we were spending a lot of time together while they were in town from Nashville. They asked me if I'd be interested in doing the album artwork and band re-brand, to which I jumped at the chance. They had some ideas around the 80s vibes of the record, and a few visual references they were feeling. I did the usual 'listen to the record, write/draw a bunch of stuff' and came up with the idea of a landscape where colors, shapes and textures would represent sounds and moments on the record. They were sold from my first concept, which is very rare, but just shows we were all on the same page. The band were great to work with—it helped being friends, as I didn't need to go through a bunch of people to get fast opinions. I created a computer-generated layout of the whole artwork, then recreated each element in real life (lots of crafting), photographed it, then brought it back into the landscape. Sonically, the record is very 'real' and I wanted the imagery details to have that finishing touch."

> *There wasn't a pinhole of light at the end of the tunnel*

After Laughter dealt with a range of topics, including death. Hayley was determined to mull over the things on her mind – and also wanted to become a kinder person.

"Man, I was just taught to be nice. I'm going to be gone one day, and I have to accept that tomorrow isn't promised. Am I OK with how I'm living today? It's the only thing I can help."

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

Lucy O'Byrne as Maria

Do-Re-Maria returns

THE hills are alive with The Sound of Music again as the wholesome alpine fresh musical returns with one of the most popular Marias of recent years in the spotlight.

Lucy O'Byrne, who returns to the iconic role of Maria, found fame when she was the runner up of BBC One's The Voice in 2015. With Will.i.am as her mentor Lucy made history as the first classical singer to reach the final.

The Irish singer won rave reviews for her performance as Maria Von Trapp in the 2016 UK touring production of The Sound of Music, being hailed as 'quite possibly the best Maria since Julie Andrews herself' by The Scotsman.

Following the tour Lucy won the coveted role of Fantine in Cameron Mackintosh's world record-breaking musical phenomenon Les Misérables, which she performed in the West End until earlier this year.

Neil McDermott takes the role of Captain Von Trapp, played by Christopher Plummer in the much-loved 1965 film. Neil played the recurring role of Ryan Molloy in EastEnders. He is also a regular on stage with roles in the West End including Chief Weasel in The Wind in the Willows and Lord Farquaad in Shrek.

This famous show began with the true story of the Von Trapp Family Singers and their escape from the Nazis after their beloved Austria became part of the Third Reich. Baroness Maria von Trapp's 1949 autobiography inspired Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse to create the Broadway musical in 1959.

The unforgettable score features some of the most memorable songs ever performed on stage, including Edelweiss, My Favorite Things, Do-Re-Mi, Climb Ev'ry Mountain, So Long, Farewell and, of course, The Sound of Music. Produced by Bill Kenwright, this production is at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday.

Coward's way at Birmingham Rep

This weekend marks the final opportunities to catch Birmingham Repertory Theatre's winter hit, The Hundred And One Dalmatians.

Once Cruella and co finally give up on their diabolical plan to turn those adorable puppies into a winter coat, following Saturday's final performance of the family favourite show, Birmingham Rep swings into its new season.

One of Birmingham's premier amateur theatre companies, Hall Green Little Theatre, stage Noel Coward's comedy Hayfever, about 1920s 'bohemians', at the Centenary Square theatre from January 26 to February 3.

More Noel Coward, pictured, arrives when an old favourite returns to the main house. Emma Rice's acclaimed production of classic romance Brief Encounter, a West End hit, will be staged in the main house from February 2 to 17.

In The Door venue at The Rep on January 26 and 27 (the latter including a matinee) Antonia Beck and Lucy Nicholls will confront their shared fear of the inevitable with The Death Show, a production unafraid of laughing at the Grim Reaper. A happening at New York's Central Park Zoo, in which a pair of male penguins tried to hatch a rock, is the inspiration for a children's show with dance which looks at the meaning of family. Penguins is at The Door from February 1 to 18, several performances are sold out.

See birmingham-rep.co.uk or call 0121 236 4455.

A night of Glee with Abigoliah

One of the world's fastest rising female comics will make a rare West Midlands appearance when she features at Birmingham's Glee Club this weekend.

Abigoliah Schamaun will feature tomorrow night (Friday) when she joins a bill with Jake Lambert and Fin Taylor. Abigoliah grew up in rural Ohio and at the tender age of 18 moved to New York to seek her fame and fortune. She didn't find it so moved to London where she has won acclaim as a stand-up comedian and actor.

Dig in to this gentle comedy boxed set

All three series of gentle comedy Detectorists are now available on DVD in a boxed set which is well worth digging into. Mackenzie Crook and Toby Jones, two fine character actors, play bickering pals who are devoted to metal detecting, both dream of making that big hoard-like find. They face difficulties in their personal lives and make enemies in their hunt for ancient gold. This gem was shown on BBC Four and may have passed by some viewers who would appreciate its slow burn comedy. It's a reminder that The Office's Mackenzie Crook, soon to be seen as a terrifying druid in Sky Atlantic's Britannia, is a master of comic timing. He also wrote and directed. Guests include Diana Rig and Peaky Blinders' Aimee-Ffion Edwards. The three series and Christmas special are available in a boxed set, as is a DVD of series three.

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SATURDAY'S TV JANUARY 13

CHOICE

Emma Willis

The Voice UK (ITV, 8pm)
Emma Willis presents the second round of Blind Auditions, as Will.i.am, Jennifer Hudson, Olly Murs and Tom Jones take their places in the famous spinning chairs once again. As ever, the competitors are invited to step onto the stage and sing to the coaches' backs, meaning they must judge the performance based on the quality of the voice alone. All four coaches will be pitching against each other to fill their teams ahead of the Battle and Knockout rounds, with the coveted recording contract with Polydor of offer to the ultimate winner.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Athletics – Great Edinburgh Cross Country. Coverage from Holyrood Park. **3.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.10** Celebrity Mastermind. **5.40** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme.

6.00 And They're Off for Sport Relief. Ore Oduba hosts a sporting challenge in which celebrities compete in a series of bizarre races.

6.40 Pointless Celebrities. John Cooper Clarke, Suzannah Lipscomb, Mark Horton, Alice Roberts, Maggie Aderin-Pocock Jim Al-Khalili, Kate Williams and Robin Ince compete in an Academia-themed edition.

7.25 Wedding Day Winners. Tim and Chris from Leicestershire compete against Richard and Kelly from Northern Ireland for the chance to win a televised wedding and a dream honeymoon.

8.25 Casualty. A reunion with an old friend gives Max cause to re-evaluate his relationship with his estranged wife Zoe, and Elle reveals she wants to tell Blake that Jacob is his father.

9.15 BBC News; Weather.

9.35 Hard Sun. Renko persuades hungry young journalist Will Benedetti to stir up trouble by posting a story about the "Hard Sun" conspiracy, and immediately finds herself in the crosshairs of Security Services agent Grace Morrigan. As the truth is made public, a surgical strike from the government manages to diffuse the situation, transforming what should be a panic-inducing revelation into a laughable hoax. However, the dossier remains unaccounted for, meaning Grace's search is not over. Meanwhile, Hicks races to catch a murderer obsessed with the impending end-of-days, and over at the facility, Daniel receives an unexpected visitor. Sci-fi thriller, starring Agyness Deyn.

10.30 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches; National Lottery Update.

11.55 The NFL Show.

12.25 Film: Mister John. (2013) **1.55** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.00** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **7.45** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **8.00** The Dengineers. **8.30** Deadly Top 10. (R) **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Steve Backshall's Extreme Mountain Challenge. (R) **11.00** Pets – Wild at Heart. (R) **12.00** The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **1.00** A Vicar's Life. (R) **1.30** Back to the Land with Kate Humble. (R) **2.30** Rome Unpacked. (R) **3.30** Brendan Foster: A Life in Athletics. (R) **4.15** Flog It! (R) **5.00** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **5.30** Tom Kerridge's Lose Weight For Good. (R)

6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall explores the curious creatures of the Jurassic Coast, including the cuttlefish and the tern, as his wildlife expedition in the West Country continues.

7.00 A House Through Time. David Olusoga focuses on the 1850s to the 1890s, revealing how a widow changed the Liverpool dwelling into a boarding house, and uncovering stories of infidelity and murder. (R)

8.00 Dad's Army. Corporal Jones misplaces £500 donated by local shopkeepers to provide a new canteen for servicemen, so the platoon tries to help him remember where he put it. (R)

8.30 Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs. Paul Murton continues his Grand Tour with a chilly swim across Loch Ba high on Rannoch Moor, and struggles against the elements while trainspotting.

9.00 Live at the Apollo. Dane Baptiste presents stand-up comedy from the Hammersmith Apollo in west London, introducing sets by Desiree Burch and Chris McCausland. (R)

9.45 QI XL. Sarah Millican, Cariad Lloyd and Alice Levine join Alan Davies and Sandi Toksvig for an extended edition of the unconventional quiz, this time focussing on "Objects and Ornaments".

10.30 Madonna Rebel Heart Tour. Footage from the American pop singer's 2015-2016 international tour, featuring performances of her recent hits, and classic tunes such as Material Girl, Holiday, and Like a Prayer.

12.30 Film: Night Train to Lisbon. (2013) **2.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.25** Save Money: Good Food. (R) **11.55** Countrywise. (R) **12.25** ITV News; Weather. **12.35** Dancing on Ice. (R) **2.30 Film:** Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home. (1995) Family adventure, starring Jason James Richter. **4.20** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R) **5.20** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.30** ITV News; Weather. **5.45** The Brits Are Coming.

6.45 Take Me Out. A gymnast from London, a bird-watcher from Manchester, a Yorkshire pig-farmer, and a vintage car enthusiast from Worcester seek the approval of Paddy McGuinness's single ladies.

8.00 The Voice UK. Emma Willis presents the second round of Blind Auditions, as Will.i.am, Jennifer Hudson, Olly Murs and Tom Jones take their places in the famous spinning chairs once again. As ever, the competitors are invited to step onto the stage and sing to the coaches' backs, meaning they must judge the performance based on the quality of the voice alone. All four coaches will be pitching against each other to fill their teams ahead of the Battle and Knockout rounds, with the coveted recording contract with Polydor of offer to the ultimate winner.

9.30 Through the Keyhole. Keith Lemon invades the homes of another three anonymous celebrities, and challenges Frankie Bridge, Jonathan Ross and Ben Shephard to guess who lives there.

10.25 ITV News; Weather.

10.45 Film: Jaws 2. (1978) A man-eating shark menaces teenagers adrift off a seaside resort, while the police chief tries to alert the community. Thriller sequel, starring Roy Scheider.

12.45 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.05 Kirstie's Vintage Gems. (R) **6.25** The King of Queens. (R) **6.50** The King of Queens. (R) **7.15** The King of Queens. (R) **7.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.35** Frasier. (R) **9.05** Frasier. (R) **9.35** Frasier. (R) **10.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.35** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Simpsons. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.00** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. Rob Walker presents live coverage of the eighth day of the event.

6.00 A Place in the Sun. Ben Hillman helps ex-RAF officers Simon Stenning and Amanda Butcher find a winter home on the Caribbean island of Antigua, showing them five properties for their £330,000 budget. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Spying on the Royals. The conclusion of the two-part documentary about surveillance on Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. In the wake of the abdication, the couple took a holiday in America, unaware they were being spied on by US intelligence agencies as well as British. The outbreak of the Second World War saw them move on to Lisbon, where their dealings with a known Nazi collaborator raised concerns for MI5. (R)

8.00 Queen Victoria's Last Love: Abdul Karim. The monarch's relationship with Indian servant Abdul Karim, which led to jealousy in the royal household when he rose from waiter to become one of Victoria's closest confidants. (R)

9.00 Film: Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation. (2015) Premiere. The team of secret agents faces being shut down when the head of the CIA convinces the US Senate that it is too dangerous. The operatives of the Impossible Mission Force become fugitives when they defy orders and plot to bring down a shadowy society of assassins. Spy thriller sequel, starring Tom Cruise, Jeremy Renner, Rebecca Ferguson and Simon Pegg.

11.40 Film: Transporter 2. (2005)

1.20 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.10** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.15** Coast vs Country. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **10.55** Police Interceptors: Deadly Pursuits. (R) **11.55** Police Interceptors: Rookies and Raids. (R) **12.55** The A-Team. (R) **1.55** The A-Team. (R) **3.00** FIA Formula E: Preview Show. A look ahead to the Marrakech ePrix. **3.30** FIA Formula E Race: Marrakech. The Marrakech ePrix. **5.15** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R)

6.10 The Wonderful World of Puppies. An insight into how very young pups begin to develop complex emotional responses to everything from relationships with litter-mates to their bond with humans.

7.00 Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups. Joe Pasquale celebrates another selection of hilarious celebrity pranks committed to film, with first-hand accounts from the people responsible for pulling the stunts, and the poor stars on the receiving end. Among the tricks highlighted are Ant and Dec springing a surprise on Jamie Oliver in his own restaurant, and Made in Chelsea star Jamie Laing pranks his own mother. Take That's Mark Owen is annoyed by a bogus lawyer, and football manager Jose Mourinho stages an elaborate joke. Includes commentary by singer Amelia Lily, Towie star James "Diags" Bennewith, weather presenter Laura Tobin, and athlete Kriss Akabusi.

8.00 Blind Date. Paul O'Grady plays Cupid for more singletons looking for love, and this time, he helps an insurance manager arrange a date with one of three self-described "cougars".

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Barnsley v Wolverhampton Wanderers and Nottingham Forest v Aston Villa.

10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including Blackburn Rovers v Shrewsbury Town and Portsmouth v Scunthorpe United.

10.30 Celebrity Big Brother.

11.30 Lip Sync Battle UK: Katie Price vs Ben Fogle. (R)

12.00 SuperCasino. **3.10 Film:** Jonah Hex. (2010) **4.30** Access. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **8.00** Alaska – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **9.00** Spiral **11.10** The Vietnam War **12.05** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.45** Great Guitar Riffs at the BBC **1.45** Alaska – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **2.45** Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **3.45** Close

ITV2

11.30 Take Me Out **12.35** Totally You've Been Framed! Gold **1.40 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **3.10** FYI Daily **3.15 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **3.45 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **4.45** FYI Daily **4.50 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **5.25 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **6.25** FYI Daily **6.30 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **9.00 Film:** 2 Fast 2 Furious (2003) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** 2 Fast 2 Furious (2003) **11.10** Family Guy **12.10** American Dad! **1.05** Release the Hounds: Love Island **2.05** Ibiza Weekender **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

2.15 Rosemary & Thyme **3.20 Film:** Columbo: Short Fuse (1972) **4.55** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** On the Buses **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

1.30 ITV Racing: Live from Warwick **4.00 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **5.10** FYI Daily **5.15 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **6.20 Film:** Kelly's Heroes (1970) **7.20** FYI Daily **7.25 Film:** Kelly's Heroes (1970) **9.25 Film:** Payback (1999) **10.25** FYI Daily **10.30 Film:** Payback (1999) **11.30 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **12.30** FYI Daily **12.35 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **1.35** Car Crash Global: Caught on Camera **2.35** Storage Wars: Texas **2.55** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

11.00 Don't Tell the Bride **12.00 Film:** The Borrowers (1997) **1.45** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.00** The Goldbergs **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter (2012) **11.05** Gogglebox **1.15** Rude Tube **2.20** Gogglebox **3.15** First Dates **4.05** How I Met Your Mother

Film4

1.00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (2004) **2.50** Robinson Crusoe on Mars (1964) **5.05** Short Circuit (1986) **7.05** Unstoppable (2010) **9.00** Dumb and Dumber To (2014)

Star Reader Travel
Hand picked holidays with you in mind

Your Chronicle in association with Omega

42nd Street

New York City, 1933, and Peggy Sawyer, just off the bus from out-of-town hicksville, manages to miss the auditions for the dazzling new Broadway show but Peggy's impromptu dance routine is later spotted by the casting director, who decides to take a chance on her after all...

All the stops are pulled out as this classic tale of Broadway's Golden Age comes to London, directed and co-written by veteran Mark Bramble and featuring the showstoppers We're In The Money, Lullaby of Broadway, Shuffle Off To Buffalo, Dames, I Only Have Eyes For You and 42nd Street.

London Theatre Break

2 Days Self-Drive - Evening Show

Departing Friday 9 Feb

Price Includes...

- ✔ 1 night B&B at the Ibis Shepherd's Bush Hotel, London
- ✔ 42nd Street theatre ticket – Grand Circle (evening performance)
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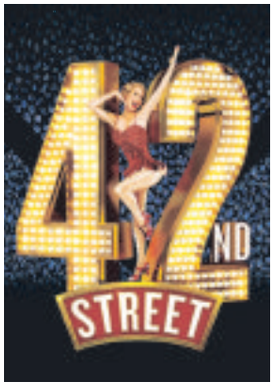
2 Days Self-Drive only **£99**



★★★★★
"The mother of all show-biz musicals"
The Daily Telegraph

Kinky Boots

Faced with bankruptcy due to competition from foreign sources, one small village's shoe factory owner embarks on a daringly different business strategy, ladies' shoes in men's sizes for the drag queen and cross-dresser market.

This true story, which in 2005 was released as a successful film, is the tale of W.J. Brooks Ltd of Earls Barton, Northampton, and its startling move into fetish footwear under the "Divine" brand. With an original score by Cyndi Lauper, this story then became a multiple Tony-award winning Broadway show, later crossing the Atlantic to London's Adelphi Theatre.

London Theatre Break

2 Days Self-Drive - Evening Show

Departing Friday 9 Feb

Price Includes...

- ✔ 1 night B&B at the Ibis Shepherd's Bush Hotel, London
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2 Days Self-Drive only **£139**

"An absolute hoot of a show!"
The Times

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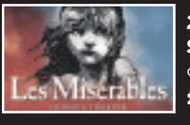

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SUNDAY'S TV JANUARY 14

CHOICE

James Norton

McMafia (BBC1, 9pm)
Benny uncovers information about a shipment of heroin being smuggled from Pakistan into India. He does not realise that Dilly is spying on him, and after a robbery, gains all the information he needs to pull off a heist - however Semiyon warns that it is Alex's decision whether the operation goes ahead. Karin is suspicious about the fund Alex is using to move Semiyon's money around, while Rebecca becomes concerned when she discovers Alex has a secret second phone. In Prague, Vadim resolves to find out who Benes is in league with.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **2.30** The Truth About Looking Good. (R) **3.30** Big Cats. (R) **4.30** Songs of Praise. **5.05** Attenborough and the Sea Dragon. (R)

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. The team reports from the Somerset Levels, where Matt Baker discovers a project to protect the common crane, a bird that now thrives in the area thanks to an unlikely partnership. Anita Rani meets an apple farmer, Adam Henson prepares for winter on his farm, and Charlotte Smith reports on the dangers of swimming in the sea. Plus, the first in a series of features on life as a rural vet.

7.30 Still Open All Hours. Granville tries to convince Mr Newbold that Mrs Featherstone has an exciting past. Eric and Cyril take up tandem cycling, and Leroy's latest task involves dressing up as a banana.

8.00 The Coronation. Documentary about the queen's coronation in 1953, featuring an interview with the monarch, who shares her memories and discusses seeing her father crowned as a child.

9.00 McMafia. Benny uncovers information about heroin being smuggled into India – but he does not realise Dilly is watching, and now has all the information he needs to pull off a heist.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's two Premier League matches – Bournemouth v Arsenal at the Vitality Stadium and Liverpool v Manchester City at Anfield.

11.30 Man Like Mobeen. New series. Sitcom about a reformed drug dealer trying to look after his younger sister. Mobeen faces a moral quandary.

11.50 Man Like Mobeen. Aks is suspended from school for fighting, and Mobeen's uncles urge him to consider an arranged marriage to provide the girl with a much-needed female role model.

12.15 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.20 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Coast. (R) **7.00** The Instant Gardener. (R) **7.45** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.15** Greatest Gardens. (R) **8.50** Countryfile. (R) **9.45** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.15** Raymond Blanc: How to Cook Well. (R) **11.45** Food & Drink. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Mark Selby v Mark Williams. **5.35** Ski Sunday.

6.20 Film: Mr Holmes. (2015) Premiere. An elderly Sherlock Holmes retires to a seaside farmhouse in the aftermath of the Second World War, and struggles to cope with his diminished faculties. Assisted by his housekeeper's inquisitive son, he tries to piece together the events of the one case that he failed to solve. Period mystery based on Mitch Cullin's novel A Slight Trick of the Mind, starring Ian McKellen.

8.00 Yellowstone: The Wildest Winter. Kate Humble, Patrick Ayree, scientists and wildlife cameramen examine the changing seasons at Yellowstone National Park during 2016, and the effect on the local American wildlife. In the first episode, Patrick follows the grizzly bears, who are taking a risk with the weather by leaving their winter dens early. Meanwhile, Kate gets to grips with the science behind this frozen season. (R)

9.00 Dragons' Den. Debrah Meaden, Peter Jones, Touker Suleyman, Tej Lalvani and Jenny Campbell once again take their places in the boardroom, as more would-be entrepreneurs pitch their business plans. This time, a former bricklayer hopes his mortar-board invention will help him build a working relationship with a Dragon, and a mother-of-two seeks an investment for her child-tracking device. Plus, a hopeful snack industry pioneer pitches crisps inspired by astronauts, and a 25-year-old designer enlists the aid of a Paralympian to demonstrate her product designed for wheelchair users.

10.00 Film: The Water Diviner. (2014) Premiere. An Australian travels to Turkey after the First World War to discover what happened to his sons. Period drama, directed by and starring Russell Crowe.

11.45 Snooker: The Masters.

12.35 Snooker: The Masters – Extra.
2.35 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **3.35** Holby City. (R) **4.35** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Ben 10. **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** River Monsters. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) **12.00** The Voice UK. (R) **1.30** ITV News; Weather. **1.40** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **2.10** The Cruise: Return to the Mediterranean. (R) **2.40 Film:** Death Becomes Her. (1992) Black comedy fantasy, starring Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep. **4.35** Regional Programme ; Weather.**4.45** ITV News; Weather. **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Dancing on Ice. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present the skating challenge, with judges Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo assessing the celebrities' performance on the ice. This week features the first skate-off of the series, as two contestants and their professional partners compete to avoid being eliminated from the contest.

8.00 Vera. The detective investigates when a seemingly beloved resident of a coastal community is fatally driven off the road, and digs up the victim's past in the hope of unmasking the killer. Crime drama based on Ann Cleeves' series of novels, starring Brenda Blethyn.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.10 Next of Kin. A GP's brother is kidnapped on his way home to the UK from his clinic in Lahore, and a counterterrorism unit is anxious to trace his son. Thriller, with Archie Panjabi. (R)

12.05 Great Art. Tim Marlow explores the legacy of 19th-century art collector Paul Durand-Ruel. (R) **1.00** Jackpot247. Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium. With Maroon 5, Earth, Wind & Fire and Ella Henderson. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.05 Kirstie's Handmade Treasures. (R) **6.10** The King of Queens. (R) **6.35** The King of Queens. (R) **7.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie's Quick & Easy Food. (R) **1.05** The Simpsons. (R) **1.35** The Simpsons. (R) **2.05 Film:** Two by Two. (2015) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voice of Tara Flynn. **3.50** Channel 4 News. **4.15** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. Rob Walker presents live coverage of the men's final.

8.00 The Biggest Little Railway in the World. The miniature train begins its 71-mile journey, and the train ferry build in the previous episode does not work as well as expected. Further down the line, the track teams have to work quickly in heavy rain while fending off midges, while other engineers have to find a way to span a 60-metre viaduct that could flood at any moment.

9.00 SAS: Who Dares Wins. The remaining recruits are put through rounds of gruelling training by special forces instructors in Morocco's Atlas Mountains. They must abseil more than 200 feet from the top of the El Mansour Dam, and undertake a gruelling mountain climb in high temperatures while each carrying 40 pounds on their back. They are also forced to accept their own personal weaknesses and find ways to turn them to their advantage, as the instructors will be looking for those who are able to find strength in adversity.

10.00 The Big Fat Quiz of Everything. Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer, Claudia Winkleman, Miranda Hart, Jonathan Ross and Nish Kumar answer Jimmy Carr's questions on the past 100,000 years of human history. (R)

12.00 Film: Killing Them Softly. (2012) Crime thriller, starring Brad Pitt. **1.45** Grand Designs Australia. A family builds a new home on a plot in the garden. (R) **2.40** Location, Location, Location. Catching up with a couple who were looking for a home in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. (R) **3.35** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **4.00** Gillette World Sport. **4.30** Coast vs Country. A couple look for a property in Cornwall either by the sea or in a rural area. (R) **5.25** Four in a Bed. (R) **5.50** Kirstie's Handmade Treasures. (R) **5.55** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.15** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.25** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Wissper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.45** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.50** Simon. (R) **7.00** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.40** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.45** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.10** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.25** Nella the Princess Knight. **8.40** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.35** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.30** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **12.00** Blind Date. (R) **1.00** Will & Grace. (R) **1.30 Film:** Are We There Yet? (2005) Family comedy, starring Ice Cube. **3.15 Film:** Dennis the Menace Strikes Again. (1998) Family comedy sequel, starring Justin Cooper. **4.40 Film:** Garfield. (2004) Family comedy, with the voice of Bill Murray.

6.10 Film: Pixels. (2015) Premiere. Aliens declare war on Earth having seen video games from the 1980s and interpreted them as a threat. Their attack comes in the form of deadly recreations of classic video games, so the US government recruits four former arcade champions to repel the attack. Sci-fi comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Peter Dinklage. Edited for violence.

7.10 5 News Update.

7.15 Film: Pixels. (2015) Concluded.

8.00 Billionaire Babies: 24 Carat Kids.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of another day for the illustrious inhabitants as they cope with the day-to-day complications of life under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, while also dealing with one another's quirks and foibles.

10.05 Film: Grown Ups 2. (2013) Four friends try to relive their youth, but find their kids have a thing or two to teach them on the last day of school. Comedy sequel, with Adam Sandler and Chris Rock.

11.55 One Night with My Ex. Suspicions of cheating destroyed the trust between Kenya and Saed, and they have not seen each other for two years. They are reunited to talk about what went wrong. (R)

12.55 SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Voyager: To the Final Frontier **9.00** Neil Armstrong – First Man on the Moon **10.00** The Sky at Night **10.30** Churchill's First World War **12.00** The Story of Maths **2.00** Neil Armstrong – First Man on the Moon **3.00** Voyager: To the Final Frontier **4.00** Close

ITV2
12.35 Take Me Out **1.50** The Voice UK **3.20 Film:** The Smurfs 2 (2013) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25 Film:** The Smurfs 2 (2013) **5.25 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **6.25** FYI Daily **6.30 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30 Film:** That Awkward Moment (2014) **1.30** FYI Daily **1.35 Film:** That Awkward Moment (2014) **2.20** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.25 Foyle's War **6.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **8.00** Secret Life of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00 Film:** Chicago (2002) **12.15** Lewis **2.15** Blue Murder **3.30** Road to Avonlea **5.10** On the Buses **5.35** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
11.50 Pawn Stars **1.40** Hornblower **3.50 Film:** Kelly's Heroes (1970) **4.50** FYI Daily **4.55 Film:** Kelly's Heroes (1970) **6.55 Film:** The Adjustment Bureau (2011) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** The Adjustment Bureau (2011) **9.00 Film:** The Krays (1990) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** The Krays (1990) **11.20 Film:** Inside Man (2006) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25 Film:** Inside Man (2006) **2.00** The Car Chasers **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 Melissa & Joey **1.30** The Goldbergs **4.00** The Big Bang Theory **8.00 Film:** Life of Pi (2012) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.30** Gogglebox **1.35** Rude Tube **2.30** First Dates **3.25** Hollyoaks

Film4
11.00 Master of the World (1961) **1.00** The Core (2003) **3.45** Hulk (2003) **6.25** The Book Thief (2013) Second World War drama, starring Sophie Nelisse. **9.00** Non-Stop (2014) An air marshal on a transatlantic flight searches for a terrorist threatening to kill the passengers one by one. Action thriller, with Liam Neeson and Julianne Moore. **11.05** Blood Ties (2013) Crime drama, starring Clive Owen and Billy Crudup. **1.40** Beauty (2011) **3.55** Close

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
The Wrong Mother, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Kaylene gives birth to twins after in vitro fertilisation, but when she needs help with home care, the nurse she hires turns out to be the unhinged woman who donated the eggs for the procedure. Thriller, starring Vanessa Marcil and Stephen Snedden. (2017)

TUESDAY
False Pretenses, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman's life is left in tatters when her wealthy husband finds he has been conned out of millions by his best friend, and kills himself. Escaping the painful memories, she moves elsewhere and slowly begins to rebuild her life - until the conman hunts her down. Thriller, starring Peta Wilson. (2004)

WEDNESDAY
A Murderer Upstairs, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A mother protects her stepdaughter after the teenager witnesses the murder of her best friend. But before long, she comes to the terrifying possibility that the girl may be the actual killer. Thriller, starring Josie Davis, Tiera Skovbye and Cameron Bancroft. (2017)

Spring Breakers, Friday, Channel 4, 12.20am

THURSDAY
Her Dark Past, Channel 5, 3.15pm
After a shooting incident leaves her in a coma, a woman awakens after three months with no memory of her true identity. Even more of a puzzle is what she could have done for someone to want her dead, and as she rediscovers her dark past, she must earn redemption along the way. Mystery thriller, starring Anna Lise Phillips and Kevin Ryan. (2016)

FRIDAY
Spring Breakers, Channel 4, 12.20am
Four teenage girls are desperate to enjoy a wild spring holiday in Florida, and resort to robbery to fund it. Their brush with the law brings them to the attention of a sleazy gangster, who seduces them further into a life of crime while giving them the hedonistic experiences they crave. Drama, starring James Franco, Selena Gomez, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Benson, Rachel Korine, Gucci Mane, Heather Morris and Ash Lendzion. (2012)

Channel 4 look to carry on the winning formula

In 2012, to celebrate its 30th anniversary, Channel 4 broadcast a 'mash-up night' in which some of its biggest personalities popped up in one another's shows.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jon Snow appeared in Channel 4 Newsreaders do River Cottage, Alan Carr joined Location, Location, Location's Kirstie Allsopp to poke around other peoples' houses, The Million Pound Drop was hosted by Phil Spencer with Davina McCall playing the game, and the Made in Chelsea cast staged Come Dine With Me.

However, the most memorable of the job-swap programmes was the merging of comedy panel show 8 Out of 10 Cats and long-running daytime quiz Countdown.

Jimmy Carr took over as host for the one-off special alongside short-skirted purveyor of numbered and lettered tiles Rachel Riley, while Cats regulars Sean Lock and Jon Richardson competed as team captains and Joe Wilkinson joined Susie Dent in Dictionary Corner.

The show was an unexpected success – it was the second most watched programme on Channel 4 that week.

Since then, 92 episodes of 'Catsdown' have aired and it was even nominated for a British Comedy Award in 2014.

So what has made the show so popular over the years?

The participants seem to think that it is down to their chemistry and banter with each other, and in Lock's case, not really caring about the result.

"It's a bit odd because normally you go on Countdown, you lose, and you're never seen again," he said in an interview with Time Out in 2013.

"Whereas I go on Countdown, I lose, and I'm back again, to get wupped over and over.

"Because Jon is like a freak. He always gets the same as Dictionary Corner and they've got a f***ing computer! He plays with his mum; he's got a Countdown clock in his loft. He does! Seriously!"

However, the studious Richardson might find it difficult to concentrate tonight as the quiz returns for its 11th run.

On his team is Wilkinson who, in the past, has appeared as Riley's assistant, often dressed in costume while using props, offering special prizes, replacing letter tiles with symbols and turning up despite having been 'fired'.

The other regular captain, Lock, is absent due to other commitments but he has an able deputy in Kevin Bridges.

The Glaswegian comic has been one of the country's most popular performers for the last decade now and tickets for his hotly anticipated tour Brand New are selling out fast.

Bridges will be joined on the panel by Jessica Knappett, best known for playing Meg in the TV series Drifters, which she also created, and Lisa in The Inbetweeners Movie.

Finally, performance poet Dr John Cooper Clarke, aka the Bard of Salford, joins the sensible Ms Dent in Dictionary Corner.

PICK OF THE WEEK

8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown, Friday, Channel 4, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Silent Witness
BBC1, 9pm
Part one of two. A woman is murdered and the forensic evidence takes the team to a cosmetic clinic where the victim had been receiving various treatments seemingly for free, but Nikki and Silva are frustrated by the CEO of Hamilton Ashe hospital when he blocks access to Karen's medical records. Meanwhile, when his daughter Rosie turns up at the Lyell as her mum is in hospital over a pregnancy complication, Thomas must play the doting father for a few weeks - a role that does not come naturally.

TUESDAY
Britain's Favourite Dogs: Top 100
ITV, 7.30pm
Britain is a nation of dog lovers, with one in four of us sharing our homes with a canine. But which of the 217 recognised breeds (and the thousands of cross breeds) can claim to be the nation's favourite? Sara Cox and Ben Fogle are about to find out as they reveal the results of one of the most comprehensive surveys on dog ownership ever undertaken in the UK. As well as running down the chart of the best-loved breeds, they'll also be hearing from famous owners, including Geri Halliwell, Simon Gregson, Phillip Schofield, Holly Willoughby and Prince Harry, exploring the key characteristics of the popular pooches that made the top 100, and sharing inspiring stories about some heroic hounds.

WEDNESDAY
Millionaires' Ex-Wives Club
BBC2, 9pm
Few divorces are painless, but as this documentary discovers, it seems the more money is at stake, the fiercer the fight – and thanks to a change in the law which means a 50/50 split is now the starting point, London has become the leading battleground in high-profile cases. Press coverage of such cases sometimes suggests that the ex-wives are just out for what they can get, but this programme meets two women who went to war with their former spouses to find out what really motivated them. It also examines the toll the legal proceedings can take on the women, as Michelle Young explains why she clocked up 65 court hearings, 13 sets of lawyers and some huge debts in her fight to prove that her former husband wasn't the penniless bankrupt her claimed, while Lisa Tchenguiz explains why her own family's wealth funded her costly divorce battle.

Silent Witness, Monday, BBC1, 9pm

Kiri
Channel 4, 9pm
Social worker Miriam is put under increasing pressure to admit she is to blame for what happened to Kiri, while the young girl's foster family of Jim, Alice and Si also find themselves thrown into the media spotlight. Elsewhere, Kiri's grandfather Tobi searches for his son, Nate, the prime suspect in the case, which sees him face up to some uncomfortable truths about his relationship with him. The four-part drama continues, starring Sarah Lancashire, Lucian Msamati and Felicia Mukasa.

THURSDAY
Death in Paradise
BBC1, 9pm
Famous thriller author Frank O'Toole is found stabbed through the heart after taking an early morning swim in the ocean. Suspicion soon falls on the victim's wife Valerie, but with eyewitnesses confirming he was swimming alone, how could anyone, let alone the prime suspect, have got from the house to the sea without being detected? Away from the investigation, Dwayne concentrates on finding a date for a voodoo love festival. Whodunit, guest starring Simon Callow, Imogen Stubbs, and Sian Gibson of Car Shame fame.

FRIDAY
Monty Don's Paradise Gardens
BBC2, 9pm
The presenter visits gardens that represent and symbolise the four areas of Islamic civilisation - Andalucian, Moghul, Persian and Ottoman - revealing the importance of Paradise Gardens celebrated in the Koran. He begins his quest in Spain, where he discovers their basic building blocks. In Morocco, he sees the wide variety of paradise gardens from an enormous royal walled meadow, to a secret inner city courtyard. Then in the Iranian desert, he uncovers the mystery to their creation.

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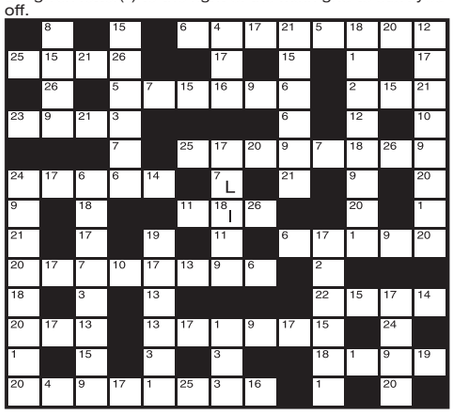
No.462

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18 I
6	19
7 L	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
R	O	E	J	P	C	B	U	L	Q	H	I	W
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
F	M	X	V	T	S	K	D	G	A	N	Z	Y

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

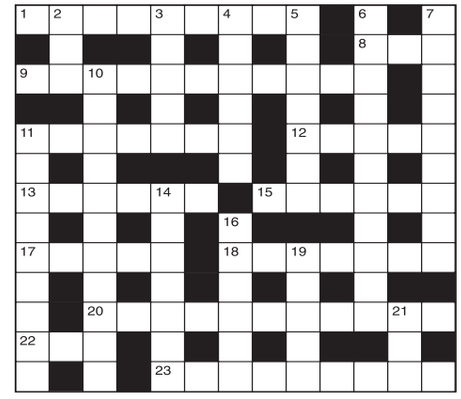
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. In the main, it can't be left (9)
8. Stir caused by short notice and nothing more (3)
9. Electric chair occupied by rulers? (4,2,5)
11. Support for one who gives a lesson (7)
12. One asked to stay made a random surmise, we hear (5)
13. Part of the world where there's a daily rising! (6)
15. Those who occupy it may be given plenty of time (6)
17. The principle is the same both ways (5)
18. Present indisputable evidence again and reprimand (7)
20. The North Sea (6,5)
22. Shelter put back for the sea-dweller (3)
23. Editress upset about northern heretic (9)

Down

2. Fasten an unfinished row of seats (3)
3. Insolvent stock exchange operator loses a letter (5)
4. Describing the mountains when one is in diverted plane (6)
5. Briefly the same bet for the old lady (7)
6. Hairdresser's staff (7,4)
7. A girl will show you the Swiss lake (9)
10. Lots of interest may attract people to this (7,4)
11. Minor tale ruined by the circus performer (4-5)
14. Spotted description of plain cake (7)
16. Marie's unusual hosts (6)
19. Carefully examine soft dress (5)
21. Yes, it's one of the pupils, we hear (3)



Quick Clues:

Across

1. Benefit (9)
8. Nothing (3)
9. Rude (11)
11. Tackle (7)
12. Weird (5)
13. Drift (6)
15. Made great efforts (6)
17. Pitiless (5)
18. Type of sword (7)
20. Anarchy (11)
22. Name for the sun (3)
23. Unsafe (9)

Down

2. Obscure (3)
3. Bravery (5)
4. Among (6)
5. Ingredient (7)
6. Question (11)
7. Innocent (9)
10. Incessantly (11)
11. Great slaughter (9)
14. Let (7)
16. Protect (6)
19. Flavour (5)
21. Small French coin (3)

Sudoku

	5	4	7			9		
				4				6
2	8				6	4	7	
9		2			4			1
	1			8			5	
			1			6		3
	4	6					1	7
5	9				1			
				6	3	8	9	

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

1	3	5	7	4	9	6	8	2
6	4	9	3	2	8	1	7	5
8	2	7	6	5	1	4	9	3
2	7	6	1	3	4	8	5	9
9	5	8	2	6	7	3	1	4
3	1	4	9	8	5	7	2	6
7	8	2	4	9	3	5	6	1
5	6	3	8	1	2	9	4	7
4	9	1	5	7	6	2	3	8

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Amends; 8 Inkpot; 10 Scuttle; 11 Islet; 12 Year; 13 Skins; 17 Sight; 18 Iron; 22 Agree; 23 Incense; 24 Annual; 25 Tuners. Down: 1 Cat's eye; 2 Refusal; 3 Edits; 4 Ensigns; 5 Spill; 6 State; 9 Deck chair; 14 Liberal; 15 Printer; 16 Intense; 19 Pagan; 20 Trunk; 21 Scrub.
QUICK - Across: 7 Repair; 8 Hasten; 10 Protect; 11 Tract; 12 Ewer; 13 Below; 17 Vague; 18 Free; 22 Lower; 23 Upright; 24 Silent; 25 Manner. Down: 1 Prophet; 2 Opposed; 3 Liken; 4 Caution; 5 Steal; 6 Unity; 9 Strenuous; 14 Vagrant; 15 Brigand; 16 Fetters; 19 Close; 20 Dwell; 21 Break.

Quiz

1. Which annual publication was first published in 1700 as Voices of the Stars?
2. What did Ben Corson and Roger Staughton invent?
3. Which 'absurdist' playwright died in March 1994?
4. Which US city was designed by French engineer Pierre L'Enfant?
5. What is the BBC's 24-hour news-and-sport radio network called?
6. Who wrote the classic US satirical novel Main Street?
7. Who presented Hampton Court Palace to Henry VIII in 1525?
8. What is the capital of Zimbabwe?
9. Which king of France did Marie Antoinette marry?
10. What is a devil's coach-horse?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Bay of Naples; 2 Nellie Melba; 3 Dublin; 4 Salzburg; 5 Apple; 6 Canterbury; 7 Princess Anne; 8 Start the Week; 9 Thermal insulation; 10 Italy.

Niner: SHRINKAGE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

785349 gives a fruit,
485691 gives more fruit,
696237 gives a South American fruit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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This break Leeds to perfect mix

FOOD and footie – that's certainly the way to the heart of the two boys in my life and we were combining the two with a weekend in Leeds.

Home for the weekend was the four-star Novotel which was just a five-minute walk from the train station.

The hotel bar – The Sugar Factory – is sparkly and metallic with a chilled out atmosphere. We supped on sumptuous cocktails while we watched sport on the huge TV screens, sitting on comfy leather sofas.

Novotel catered for both the youngsters and the adults with a gym, web corner and games area for the young ones.

The hotel was in an ideal location close to the city centre. It was easy to get around on foot because the centre seems to be based on a grid system and when we ventured out with our Family Day Rover passes it also seemed so simple on public transport.

Chance to pull a few pints at The Woolpack

Impressive – The Corn Exchange in Leeds

MATCH

Our reason for being in Leeds was for a football match at Elland Road – both my husband and son were over the moon that we managed to have a great view in the press box.

The match had switched to a Friday night, so that gave us plenty of time to explore this eclectic city.

Just 10 minutes bus ride from the hotel was the Emmerdale Studio Experience. For fans of the soap this is a dream. On the 80-minute guided tour at the former ITV studios, you can find out how story lines are put together, visit the make-up department, sit at the Woolpack bar and wander through the model village.

We had now worked up an appetite and made our way back into the centre for lunch at Pizza Fella, in Vicar Lane. Peering through the window the restaurant looked totally unassuming from the outside with its contemporary bare wooden interior, but the pizzas were to die for.

In the evening, it was the off to Meat Liquor in Trinity Leeds. Trinity has about 120 shops with plenty of bars and restaurants.

Meat Liquor was very retro and funky with 70s-style tables and it was back to basics with kitchen roll on the table and sauces.

There is so much more to Leeds than bars and restaurants. It is home to the Royal Armouries, which is outstanding and jaw-dropping for both adults and youngsters alike. The museum is home to the UK's largest collection of arms, armour and artillery. There are six themed galleries – and it is free.

If you still have time there is also shopping with a mixture of independent, boutique and mainstream shops.

Leeds is bidding to become European Capital of Culture 2023 and you can certainly see why they describe it as a 'diverse and vibrant culture'.

It was voted one of the top 10 European cities in 2017 by Lonely Planet. It boasts more than 300 bars and restaurants and a walk through the streets in the evening just goes to show it is thriving.

Sport is also big in the city and Leeds has hosted huge events including Tour de France Grand Depart in 2014 and the Rugby World Cup in 2015 was hosted at Elland Road.

Leeds is a mixture of old and new with a wonderful collection of buildings, bars and restaurants and attractions. And let's just say that we had far more success with the food than the footie.

LISA BAILEY

PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Two-bedroomed bungalow is very well presented

In a quiet cul-de-sac position, this highly attractive and very well presented two-bedroomed detached bungalow in Lydford Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, is deceptively spacious.

Being just a few minutes walk from Bloxwich High Street and King George V Memorial Playing Fields, it is for sale through Marrion & Co estate agents at £249,950.

Having gas central heating and double glazing, its accommodation briefly comprises an enclosed storm porch, an entrance hallway, a lounge, a breakfast kitchen, conservatory, two bedrooms, a shower room, a tandem garage with a utility area, a driveway and well maintained fore and rear gardens.

This attractively-styled detached bungalow forms part of this popular residential development known as Sefton Park.

Also adjoining King George V playing fields, this sought-after development is situated within the catchment area for the Walsall Academy and many other local schools. Frequent and regular public transport services are also available nearby together with access to the Midland motorway network.

In more detail the front garden is mainly laid to lawn, and the driveway provides parking for several vehicles, leading to the tandem garage.

The entrance hallway has pull down loft ladders and a storage cupboard. The lounge has a bay window to the front and a contemporary feature fireplace housing a flame-effect electric fire.

Having a range of high gloss white wall and base units with contrasting work surface over, the breakfast kitchen includes an integrated fan-assisted electric oven, a hob with an extractor over, space for a fridge/freezer and a door through to the conservatory.

Bedroom one has fitted wardrobes. Bedroom two/dining room has a window to the front. The shower room/WC has a a white high gloss vanity unit and a low level WC, a double walk-in shower cubicle with a Triton instant electric shower.

The utility room has a base unit with a work surface over with space and plumbing for a washing machine. The rear garden is very private, being mainly laid to lawn with a patio and a garden shed.

BLOXWICH £249,950

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Marrion & Co
TEL: 01922 404446
EMAIL: sales@marrion.co.uk

KEY FEATURES

- Detached bungalow
- 2 bedrooms
- Deceptively spacious
- Quiet cul-de-sac
- Conservatory

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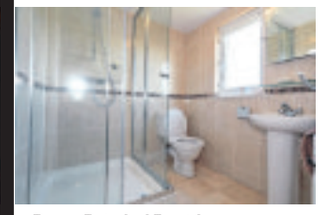
WILLENHALL
ASHMORE LAKE ROAD

- Deceptively Spacious
- Hall, Lounge
- Dining Room
- Refitted Kitchen
- 2 Bedrooms
- Refitted Bathroom
- Parking
- Rear Garden
- NO CHAIN

£120,000 Offers Over

WALSALL
GILLITY CLOSE



- Dorma Detached Bungalow
- Entrance Hallway
- large Family Lounge
- Seven Bedrooms
- Bathroom and Shower Room
- Sitting Room
- Kitchen/diner, Utility
- En-suite and shower room
- Gardens
- Double Garage

OFFERS OVER £500,000

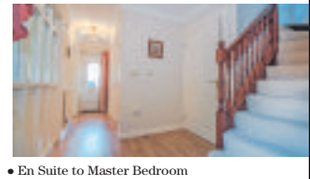
REDUCED

ESSINGTON
HOUGH WAY

- Modern Apartment
- Second Floor
- Open Plan Lounge/Diner
- Bathroom
- 2 Bedrooms
- 2 Allocated Parking
- Viewing Essential

£118,000

BLOXWICH
POPULAR COURT



- Modern Extended Detached
- Through Hallway, Lounge/diner
- Kitchen, Dining Room
- Guest WC
- En Suite to Master Bedroom
- Family Bathroom
- 4 Bedrooms
- Integral Garage

£239,950

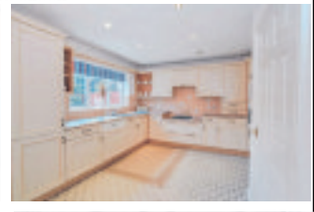
NEW

BLOXWICH
LYDFORD ROAD

- Detached Bungalow
- Sought After Location
- Through Hallway
- Lounge
- Refitted Kitchen
- Utility Room
- 2 Double Bedrooms
- Generous Garage
- Viewing Recommended

£249,950

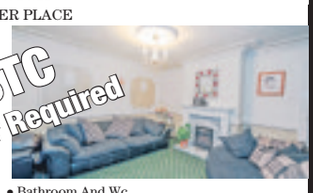
BLOXWICH
BEALEYS CLOSE



- Adjacent to Turnberry Estate
- 3 Reception Rooms
- Breakfast Kitchen, Conservatory
- Utility, Guests WC
- 4 Bedrooms
- En-Suite Bathroom
- Double Garage
- Must Be Viewed
- NO CHAIN

£325,000

BLOXWICH
LANCASTER PLACE



- Entrance Hallway
- Lounge
- Kitchen Diner,
- Three Bedrooms
- Bathroom And Wc.
- Gardens,
- Driveway
- Detached Garage.

OFFERS OVER £113,000

WALSALL
WOLVERHAMPTON ROAD

- Traditional Spacious
- Lounge
- Dining Room
- Kitchen
- 2 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- Gardens
- Viewing Essential

£94,950

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Town house would be ideal first buy

REEDSWOOD
£130,000

This superbly presented three-bedroomed end town house in Norfolk New Road, Reedswood, Walsall, is for sale through L&S Prestige Estates at offers over £130,000.

The living accommodation comprises an entrance hall, a lounge, a modern fitted kitchen/diner, three nicely proportioned bedrooms and a family bathroom. The property also benefits from having double glazing and gas central heating throughout.

Outside there is both a garden and a driveway to the fore and an enclosed garden to the rear.

The property is superbly situated for easy access to a wide range of local amenities. There is a choice of popular schools and excellent transport links, including Junction 10 of the M6. This really would make an excellent first-time buy and interested parties are strongly encouraged to arrange internal viewing.

Call L&S Prestige Estates on 01902 606595 or visit www.prestige-estatesuk.com

Four-bedroomed detached family home on edge of town centre

BLOXWICH
£239,950

Within walking distance of Bloxwich town centre, this modern detached family home in Park Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, is extended and very well presented.

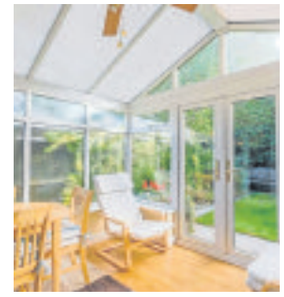
Ideally located, it is for sale through Webbs Estate Agents at £239,950.

It is situated in a private gated development on the edge of Bloxwich town centre, being close to good schools, local amenities and bus routes.

Its accommodation briefly comprises a through hallway, a lounge/diner, a kitchen, a dining room, a guest WC, four bedrooms, an en-suite to the master bedroom and a family bathroom.

Outside there is an integral garage, driveway and landscaped gardens.

Call Webbs Estate Agents on 01922 663399 or visit www.webbsestateagents.co.uk



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2	EPC C

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Shoreham Close, Willenhall
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Bloxwich Road South, Willenhall
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Roebuck Glade, Off Stroud Av, Willenhall
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2	3
1	EPC D

Monmouth Road, Bentley, Walsall
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2	3
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1	EPC TBC

Cumberland Road, Willenhall
£119,950

2	3
1	EPC C

Kingfisher Court, Clarkes Lane, Willenhall
£87,500

1	2
1	EPC C

Rosehill, Willenhall
£79,950

1	2
1	EPC TBC

Fisher Street, Willenhall
Auction Guide Price £72,000

2	2
1	EPC TBC

Market Place, Willenhall
£60,000

1	2
1	EPC E

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Netley Road, Bloxwich Walsall
Auction Guide Price £80,000

1	2
1	EPC D

Borneo Street, Walsall
NEW
Auction Guide Price £115,000

3	3
1	EPC D

Stoney Lane, Bloxwich Walsall
NEW
Offers in the Region Of £174,950

2	3
1	EPC E

Stamping Way, Bloxwich Walsall
Offers in the Region Of £174,950

1	3
2	EPC B

Victoria Avenue, Bloxwich Walsall
REDUCED
Offers in the Region Of £259,500

3	4
2	EPC E

Station Road, Walsall
REDUCED
Offers in Excess Of £180,000

2	3
2	EPC D

Tintern Way, Bloxwich Walsall
NEW
£97,500 Offers

1	3
1	EPC -TBC

Green Lane, Walsall
NEW
£189,950

2	3
2	EPC D

High Street, Bloxwich Walsall
£124,950 Offers

1	3
1	EPC D

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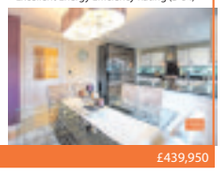
- Granite Kitchen Worktops
- Excellent Energy Efficiency Rating (B-84)



£439,950

Lichfield Road, Willenhall

- Substantial Detached Home
- Six Bedrooms
- Four Reception Rooms
- Three Bathrooms
- 27" Kitchen/Diner
- EPC - D 67

£350,000

NEW

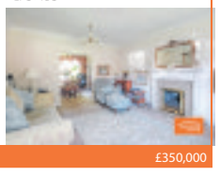
Coronation Avenue, Willenhall

- Beautiful Traditional Semi-Detached
- Three Reception Rooms
- Extended Kitchen
- Victorian Fireplace in Dining Room
- Fitted Wardrobes in Two Bedrooms
- Refitted Shower Room
- Delightful Rear Garden
- Off Road Parking
- Must Be Viewed!!
- EPC - E 43

£165,000

Ferndown Close, Turnberry Estate

- Four Bedroom Detached Property
- Secluded Cul-de-Sac Location
- Four Good Sized Bedrooms
- Potential to Extend (STPP)
- Double Garage
- EPC - TBC



£350,000

Field Road, Bloxwich

- Beautiful Detached Family Home
- Four Good Sized Bedrooms
- Two Reception Rooms
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen
- Conservatory
- EPC - C 80

£239,950

NO CHAIN

Long Lane, Great Wryley

- Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
- Extended Lounge & Dining Room
- Fitted Kitchen
- Potential for Further Extension
- Superb Views Across Open Fields
- EPC - D 62

£225,000

Griffins Crescent, Walsall

- 'The Kingsford' Design by Taylor Wimpey
- Popular Saddlers Brook Development
- Three Bedroom Semi Detached
- Easy Access to Local Towns and the M6
- Granite Tiled Flooring in Hall & Kitchen
- EPC - C 79

£190,000

NEW

Station Road, Rushall

- Modern Taylor Wimpey Built Town House
- Two Double Bedrooms
- En-Suite to Master Bedroom
- Downstairs W.C.
- Currently Let for £600pcm
- Ideal First Purchase or Buy-to-Let
- NO CHAIN
- Must Be Viewed!!
- EPC - B 85

£137,500

NO CHAIN

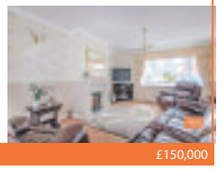
Woodall Street, Bloxwich

- Four Bed Detached
- Fitted Kitchen
- Lounge/Diner
- Guest W.C.
- Family Bathroom
- EPC - C 79

£180,000

Gerrard Road, Willenhall

- Extended Semi-Detached
- Side Garage & Driveway
- Desirable Cul-de-Sac Location
- Lounge/Diner
- Modern Kitchen
- EPC - TBC



£150,000

NEW

Odell Road, Leamore

- Refurbished Three Bedroom Property
- Lounge with Bay Window
- Refitted kitchen/Diner
- Gas Central Heating
- Double Glazing
- Three Generous Bedrooms
- Refitted Bathroom
- Front & Rear Gardens
- Ideal First Time Purchase
- EPC - C 76

£130,000

NO CHAIN

Usk Close, Bloxwich

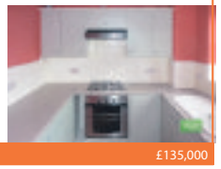
- Well Presented Semi-Detached
- Cul-de-Sac Location
- Driveway for Two Cars
- Ground Floor WC
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen
- EPC - D 68

£140,000

NO CHAIN

Astbury Close, Turnberry Estate

- ●●OPEN DAY●● SATURDAY 13TH JANUARY 2018. CALL GOODCHILDS ESTATE AGENTS ON 01922 711444 TO BOOK IN.
- Ideal First Time Buy
- Close to Bloxwich Train Station
- EPC - C 70



£135,000

NO CHAIN

Somerfield Road, Bloxwich

- Extended Mid-Terrace
- Main Lounge
- Dining Room
- Extended Breakfast Kitchen
- Refitted Bathroom
- EPC - E 54

£120,000

NO CHAIN

Wenlock Gardens, Leamore

- Two Bedroom Semi-Detached House
- Lounge with French Doors
- Fitted Kitchen
- Ground Floor WC
- Gas Central Heating
- EPC - D 68

£115,000

NO CHAIN

Hadley Way, Beechdale

- Deceptively Spacious Mid Town House
- Three Bedrooms
- Fitted Kitchen
- Generous Living Room
- Bathroom with Separate Shower Cubicle
- EPC - C 73

O.I.E.O £110,000

NO CHAIN

Saldavian Court, Pleck

- Two Bedroom Flat
- Ideal Buy-To-Let (450pcm)
- Cul-de-sac Location
- Close to Pleck Park
- Garage to Rear
- EPC - F 30

£85,000

NO CHAIN

Bloxwich Road, Leamore

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GUIDE £78,000

NO CHAIN

Wareham Close, Walsall

- One Bedroom House
- Ideal Buy-To-Let (450pcm)
- Lounge with Feature Fireplace
- Fitted Kitchen
- Double Bedroom
- EPC - D 64

O.I.E.O £75,000

NO CHAIN

Marsh Street, Walsall

- Studio Apartment in Walsall Town Centre
- Separate Shower Room
- Fitted Kitchen
- Balcony with Canal Views
- Close to all amenities
- EPC- E 78

O.I.E.O £70,000

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Energy Rating - E NEW

St Annes Road
Willenhall

- Mid Terraced house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Two Reception Rooms, Fitted kitchen
- 2 bedrooms, Upstairs Bathroom/WC
- Rear Garden
- SORRY DSS, PETS OR SMOKERS
- £180 reference fee applies

£550

Energy Rating - D NEW

Fountains Road
Bloxwich

- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- Lounge, kitchen
- 3 bedrooms
- Garden
- Bathroom/WC
- Viewing Essential
- No Onward Chain

£95,000

Energy Rating - E NEW

Hollybank Avenue
Essington

- Extended Semi Detached House
- Three Bedrooms
- Sought after cul de sac location
- Double Glazing
- Gas Central Heating (where specified)
- Front Kitchen
- Rear Lounge/Diner
- Large Tandem Garage

£154,950

Energy Rating - C NEW

Lichfield Court
Walsall

- Well presented first floor flat
- PVCu double glazed electric heating
- Lounge/Diner
- Fitted kitchen
- Two bedrooms
- Re-fitted bathroom
- Garage in separate block
- NO ONWARD CHAIN

£85,000

Energy Rating - C NEW

Lydford Road
Bloxwich

- Detached Bungalow
- Immaculately Presented
- Gas Central Heating, PVCu double glazing.
- 2 Bedrooms, Lounge,
- Breakfast kitchen, Conservatory
- Shower Room,
- Tandem Garage Driveway
- Gardens

£249,950

Energy Rating - D NEW

Hawbush Road
Walsall

- Extended Semi-Detached House
- Double Glazing & Gas Central Heating
- Rear Lounge, Front Dining Room
- Three Bedrooms
- Family Bathroom
- Off Road Parking
- NO ONWARD CHAIN
- Rear Garden

£120,000

Energy Rating D NEW

Gurnard Close
Coppice Farm

- Semi detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Garage
- Driveway
- Gardens

£150,000

Energy Rating - D NEW

Field Road
Bloxwich

- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen, conservatory
- 3 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Parking and gardens
- SORRY NO DSS, PETS OR SMOKERS
- £180 reference fee applies

£675

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Cliveden Avenue
Aldridge

- Spacious Semi-Detached
- Gas Central Heated & Double Glazed
- Front Lounge
- Rear Sitting Room
- Re-Fitted Extended Dining Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Family Bathroom
- Garage, Driveway

£250,000

Energy Rating - D NEW

Church Street
Bloxwich

- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed (where specified)
- Through Lounge, Dining Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Front and Rear Gardens
- NO ONWARD CHAIN
- Bathroom/WC

£100,000

Energy Rating - E NEW

Stoney Lane
Bloxwich

- Traditional Detached Home
- Gas Central Heating, Double Glazed (W/S)
- Rear Lounge, Front Dining Room
- Family Room, Kitchen
- Conservatory, Guest WC
- 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom
- Garage, Large Driveway
- Mature Gardens

£365,000

Energy Rating - B

Mattesley Court
Bloxwich

- Over 55 years of age Development
- 40% Ownership
- Second floor apartment
- Residents lounge, restaurant
- Hair salon, shop, laundry room
- 2 bedrooms, wet room/WC
- Fitted kitchen, lounge
- Ample parking and communal gardens

£35,000

Energy Rating - D

Charlotte Street
Walsall

- Ground floor flat
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Kitchen, lounge
- Double bedroom
- Paved rear yard
- bathroom/WC
- NO ONWARD CHAIN

£59,995

Energy Rating - B

Water Reed Grove
Walsall

- Self contained 2nd floor apartment
- Centrally heated & PVCu Double Glazing
- lounge/dining room, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms
- Allocated parking space
- Bathroom
- Communal Gardens
- No Onward Chain

£82,950

Energy Rating - D

Pelsall Road
Brownhills

- Traditional Semi-Detached House
- Refurbished throughout
- Through Lounge/Diner
- Re-fitted kitchen,
- Utility Room,
- Conservatory,
- Three Bedrooms
- Re-fitted Bathroom

£194,950

Energy Rating - D

Long Lane
Great Wyrley

- Traditional extended semi detached House
- Four Bedrooms
- Spacious Lounge, Dining Room
- Breakfast Kitchen
- Conservatory, Utility Room
- Downstairs W.C.
- Family Bathroom, Driveway, Small Garage Rear Garde
- No Onward Chain

£224,950

Energy Rating - D

Westminster Road
Rushall

- Detached bungalow
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen
- dining room (alternative bedroom 4)
- 3/4 Bedrooms
- bathroom/WC, Garage
- driveway gardens

£259,950

Energy Rating - C

Bealeys Close
Bloxwich

- Modern Detached Family Home
- Gas Central Heating, PVCu Double Glazing
- Lounge, Dining Room, Study
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen, Utility Room, Conservato
- Four Bedrooms,
- Ensuite Bathroom
- Family Bathroom, Detached Double Garage Driveway
- Private Rear Garden

£325,000

Energy Rating - D

Paddock Gardens
Walsall

- Modern Detached Family Home
- Three Reception Rooms
- Kitchen
- 5 Bedrooms - Master En-suite
- Family Bathroom
- Double Garage
- Driveway
- Large Rear Garden

£600,000

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We know the value of good service...

Peugeot 5008 SUV has right recipe

By Carmel Stewart

At this stage in our buying lives, money matters and, with a starting price of less than £24,500 and an excellent standard spec list, the new 5008 SUV from Peugeot ticks all the fiscal boxes and a few more besides.

Added to that is the fact that it is spacious, easy to drive, comfortable and, with room enough for seven, immensely practical.

If you are not a school-runner, don't be put off by the multiple seats. Such is the sophistication of this modern design that everything fits into a neat package 4.64m in length – that's just over 15 foot in old money – and those two rearmost seats neatly and easily drop into the boot floor when not in use.

The middle row individually adjusts backwards and forwards and can incline separately. The front seats may, at first sight, be off putting to those of us of larger dimensions. The two seats, separated by a large central console, are described as 'body-hugging' but are more supportively friendly than grippingly unfriendly.

Engine choices number seven – two petrol and five diesel – with five and six speed manual transmissions depending on engine size plus an excellent automatic available as an option.

Trim levels number three – Active, Allure and GT Line – together with a top spec GT version which is uniquely powered by a 2.0litre Blue HDi 180hp engine coupled with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

On the road, behind the neat and tidy flat-topped/bottomed, fully adjustable steering wheel, the 5008 offers an excellent drive with very decent road holding and all-absorbing suspension. Although engines up to 2.0litres and 181 bhp are available, the award-winning 1.2 petrol Pure Tech Engine of the Year, with 131 bhp at its disposal, proved to be a revelation with plenty of unwavering power, smoothly delivered via the six-speed manual transmission.

Prices for the 5008 start at £24,495 and include a very generous standard spec with remote central locking, Bluetooth, DAB radio, three Isofix fittings, cruise control, spare wheel, all-round electric windows and rear parking sensors as well as is Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity.

A step up to Allure adds Connect SOS, tinted rear windows, a 180-degree reversing camera and Tom-Tom navigation. Inevitably the price increases, in this case to £26,295.

The GT Line, which starts at £28,195, includes self-levelling headlights, sporty front design, and a smartphone charging plate (a £120 option on Active and Allure) while the GT version adds leather seats and multiway adjustable electric seats with massage function while upping the starting price to £35,695.

The new 5008 is the third SUV to be launched by Peugeot in the past 18 months, following in the tyre treads of the 2008 and the highly successful all-new 3008 which has sold more than 200,000 units globally in just a few months.

The runaway success of the Peugeot 3008 is no guarantee that the larger 5008 will be as successful but there is really no reason why it shouldn't.

It is spacious, easy to drive and comfortable

The car has a very generous standard specification

The 5008 is the third SUV to be launched by Peugeot in the past 18 months, following in the treads of the 2008 and 3008

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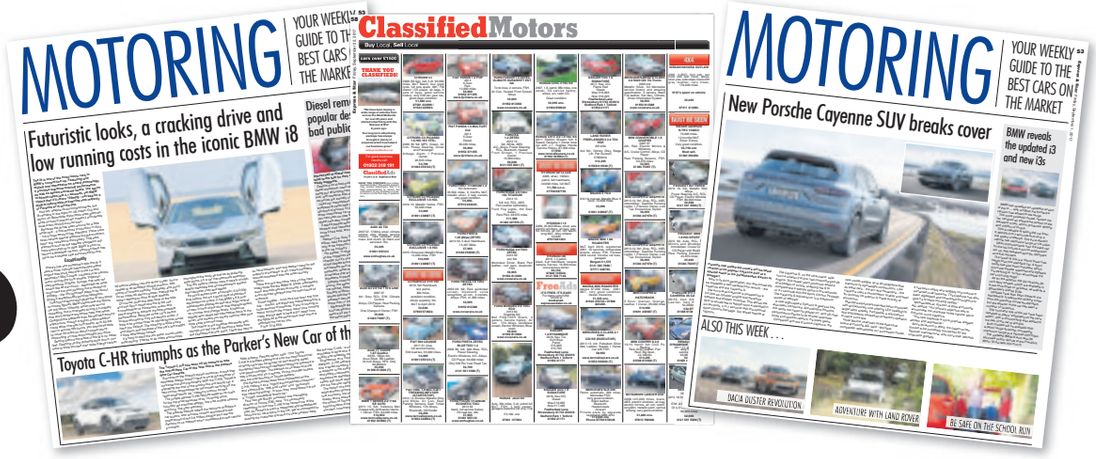

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Yorkshire lad Don has Black Country at heart

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joe Masi

FEW players can claim to have won the hearts of both Wolves and Albion fans, but few scored goals like Don Goodman.

It is 24 years since then Wolves boss Graham Taylor splashed out £1.1million to sign the striker from Sunderland, bringing him back to the Black Country three years after leaving The Hawthorns.

He had been a huge hit with the Baggies, scoring 63 goals in 163 appearances, and while his time at Wolves was a little less prolific – 39 goals in 154 games – it built to a crescendo that saw him net an FA Cup quarter-final winner against Leeds in his final season.

Avoided

Born in Leeds on May 9, 1966, only weeks before the whole nation were partying having lifted the World Cup, Goodman was perhaps destined to become a footballer. 'The Don' started his career with Bradford City in 1984, but it was in the Black Country that the striker really made a name for himself, impressing Ron Saunders enough to fork out £50,000 in March 1987.

He made his debut against Oldham later that month and, a few weeks later, netted his first goal in a 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace. Just seven league goals would follow in 1987/88 as Albion narrowly avoided relegation from the old Division Two, but 1988/89 (15) and 1989/90 (21) would prove to be better campaigns on a personal level.

However, Goodman's love affair with the Baggies became shaky in 1991 as he made a £900,000 move to Sunderland. Goodman has since explained that Albion's decision to sell him was purely for the financial benefit of the club as they made a handsome profit on what they paid Bradford for him.

His three-year stay at Roker Park saw him net 42 goals in 116 appearances, but soon after the Black Cats' relegation to the third tier he was on his way back to the West Midlands, brought in by Taylor on the same day as John de Wolf from Feyenoord. Partnering either Steve Bull or David Kelly up front, he helped guide Wolves to the play-offs twice in three seasons – falling though at the semi-final stage on each occasion.

But perhaps Goodman's finest moment in a Wolves shirt would arrive at Elland Road on March 7, 1998, as he scored the only goal of the game to send Wolves into their first FA Cup semi-final in 17 years. Defeat to Arsenal stopped them going to Wembley and he finished his Wolves career with a flourish, netting three goals in his final four games. That would not save him from Mark McGhee's clear-out in the summer though and – aside from a brief loan stint at Barnsley – he spent three years out of English football at Sanfrecce Hiroshima in Japan and Motherwell in Scotland.

However, the Black Country came calling again in March 2001 – and this time it was the Saddlers.

Promotion

Aged 34, his goal record was drying up – but one of the three he scored was a vital equaliser in the play-off final win over Reading that won promotion to the second tier.

He spent another year at Walsall before moving on to Exeter City, but the West Midlands called one last time – joining Stafford Rangers for a season before retiring – and he is now carving out a successful career as television pundit with Sky Sports.

The Don, in his West Bromwich Albion colours in a four-year stint during which he scored 60 goals

Walsall's goalscorers Darren Byfield and Don celebrate winning the Nationwide League Division Two play off final at the Millennium Stadium, in May 2001

Wolves match winner Don celebrates after his winning goal gave Wolves FA Cup quarter final victory over Leeds in 1998. But then Arsenal spoiled the party

Last year, Don was one of the football luminaries at a 'Smile for Joel' event. Back from left, Joe Mayo, Ally Robertson, Matt Murray, Don, Ray Graydon, Front, from left, Darren Wrack, Joel's brother Owen Richards, and mother Suzy Richards, with ex-Wolves' Mel Eves and John Richards

With his former Wolves strike partner, Steve Bull, Don took part in a charity golf event which was held at Shifnal Golf Club in May last year

Former Wolves manager, the late Graham Taylor with new signings John de Wolf and Don Goodman at Molineux in 1994

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Sport

The boy Don good! Player who crossed Black Country divide

Page 43

Wood work hard for win to top table

Paget Rangers 2 Walsall Wood 3

A LAST minute winner for Wood took them to the top of the table on goal difference, the Bears had twice fought back from a goal down and looked to have won a point after equalising in the 82nd minute, but a super strike by Tony Clarke gave Wood an extremely hard fought victory.

It was an attacking start by both sides.

The breakthrough came on 33 minutes, a suicidal back pass was caught by Benton and then thrown behind for a corner when he realised what he'd done. Peter Till delivered the right wing flag kick Hurren climbed highest heading the ball back to the near post, Jake Humphries turning to force the ball home from close range.

Agar and new signing Lei Brown were always dangerous but the final ball was just missing. A debatable free kick just outside the D on 55 minutes was fired low into the left hand corner by Dean Morris for a deserved equaliser.

The sides swapped chances until on 77 minutes Craig Deakin was fouled wide right, Till delivered the free kick beyond the far post, Tolley powered a header back into the centre, Agar scoring with a powerful header into the roof of the net.

Within five minutes the hosts were back on level terms, a long ball forward by Bradley saw Carter hold off a defender and slide the ball under the advancing Ransome. From a goal kick Wood played the ball up to the left of the box, Clarke held the ball up before firing home a peach of a low drive.

Fans ready to grill Whitney and board members of club

WALSALL fans are being urged to attend a public meeting in a bid to get answers about how the club is being run on and off the field.

The Walsall Football Supporters Trust has issued a rallying call to all Saddlers fans after the club announced they would hold a fan focus meeting today, Thursday.

Last week, the trust threw its support behind a planned protest due to take place during Saturday's game with Oxford.

A vocal section of the club's fan base have become frustrated with how Jon Whitney is managing the team, and how owner Jeff Bonser is running the club.

Those supporters plan to stand outside the Banks's Stadium during Saturday's match instead of buying tickets.

But before then fans have been given a chance to grill Whitney, as well as chief executive Stefan Gamble and club secretary Dan Mole at a focus meeting.

The meeting will take place at the Banks's Stadium, from 6.30pm.

Questions to the trust can be emailed to walsall1888@aol.com

Dobson delight as he joins Saddlers

George Dobson

GEORGE Dobson says he doesn't regret joining Sparta Rotterdam in the summer – but revealed he couldn't say no when Walsall moved to re-sign him.

The midfielder signed a two-and-a-half year deal at the Banks's Stadium after having his contract at the Eredivisie side terminated by mutual consent.

Dobson spent last season on loan at The Banks's from West Ham and made 26 appearances. Dobson made five Eredivisie appearances. And while he enjoyed the experience under former Netherlands boss Dick Advocaat at Sparta, he is now delighted to be back in the West Midlands. "It was a completely different experience playing in Holland," Dobson said.

"The playing style was different and it was tough living away from home. It was a completely different lifestyle.

"When I was out of the team I found it quite tough. It's something I definitely don't regret, but once I got the opportunity to come back to Walsall I jumped at it."

Boss Jon Whitney admitted he was delighted to finally land Dobson.

"George is a player who is really highly thought of here, not just from myself but the players as well," Whitney said. "He really improved his fitness when he was here and we tried to get him on a permanent in the summer."

CLASSY KIDDER BEAT WALSALL

Kidderminster 21 Walsall 13

WALSALL Rugby Club would have been fairly confident of achieving a good result when they made their latest visit to Kidderminster.

The Worcestershire team are rooted near the foot of the league table. But the home team performance belied their lowly league position, playing with a great deal of confidence and showed some superb ball retention skills.

The rather lethargic approach of the Walsall players was evident at the start of the game. Flanker Matt James took the ball at the kick off, but lacked support as the home team managed to regain possession.

No8 Mason crashed over for a score from close range with Pinner adding the conversion. But, in a rather frantic opening five minutes, Walsall levelled. The ball was spilled at the restart and the visitors were quick to get forward, with Rod Dickson breaking through and from 30 metres which, Roger Weston converted.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the pitch Weston put over two well struck penalties to establish a 13 – 7 interval lead.

In the second half, the hosts' driving and support play proved to be very effective. The Walsall defence tried to repel the attack, and although Mason was stopped, flanker Protheroe made the final try scoring charge with Pinner adding another conversion. An injury to No8 Lucak added to Walsall's worries. They tried, however, to get back in the game with Nico Watkins and Rob Angell making good runs.

But a rather harsh penalty deep in Kidderminster territory resulted in more good forward drives by the hosts with lock forward Phillips getting the final touchdown.

Pinner's conversion proved to be the final score of the afternoon.

This Saturday Walsall will face a severe test in defending their unbeaten home record when, promotion chasing, Leek are the visitors to Delves Road.

Trio's fighting spirit rewarded

From left, Wictor Horodecki, Felicity Williams and Henry Leighton

THREE young martial arts students have been recognised for their commitment to their club.

Wictor Horodecki, Felicity Williams and Henry Leighton were presented with a certificate of 100 per cent attendance having trained every Thursday evening since Black Star Aikido club opened in November at Brownhills Memorial Hall.

Chief instructor, 3rd Dan Andrew Leighton, was proud to make the presentation and gave a further merit to Horodecki of most improved student, for impressing teachers with his enthusiasm, efforts and progress. Leighton said: "Our training allows the students to develop respect for themselves and their training partners along with learning counting, reading out loud and basic interaction and social skills."

Classes are for aged five and upwards. Call Andrew Leighton on 07966 488171 or email info@blackstaraikido.com for more details.

Penalties dismay for Darlaston

DARLASTON Town (1874) bowed out of the Birmingham County FA Vase at the third round stage losing out 4-3 on penalties to Everards Brewery league leaders Rugby Borough.

Darlaston started the game at a quick pace. Tyrone Clarke-

With just one defeat in 15 league games the visitors showed their credentials playing their football from the keeper at every available opportunity as did Darlaston leading to some excellent build-up play from both sides.

The pace of 49 goal striker Adam Shaw was impressive and he broke clear of the home defence twice, Shaw and Chater both sending long range efforts wide. A fine sliding block from Zuki Stanton prevented a certain Rugby goal after 31 mins.

Darlaston opened the second half brightly Clarke-O'Connell had a goal bound effort blocked and just three minutes into the half Darlaston took a deserved lead. Taylor burst into the penalty area but was sent tumbling to the ground by Rugby keeper Logan Maketa. Sam Giles stepped up to dispatch the penalty with ease.

In the 83rd minute Darlaston's inability to defend set-pieces bit them again, an Alex Shaw corner from the right was headed across goal and Jamie Payne headed home. As the game went into the dying moments both sides had half chances to win the game, but none were taken and the game went straight to a penalty shoot out.

On-loan pair back with parent clubs

ZELI Ismail and Daniel Agyei have been recalled to their parent clubs from loan spells at The Saddlers.

Ismail, aged 24, joined in August from League One rivals Bury and boss Jon Whitney had expressed a desire to keep the winger at the Banks's Stadium.

The manager has also confirmed the loan of striker Daniel Agyei from Burnley would not be extended. He scored five times in 21 appearances.

Whitney said: "Dan's attitude has been really good but we couldn't guarantee him minutes here. We would have loved to have kept Zeli but he's Bury's player so they have called him back."

★★★

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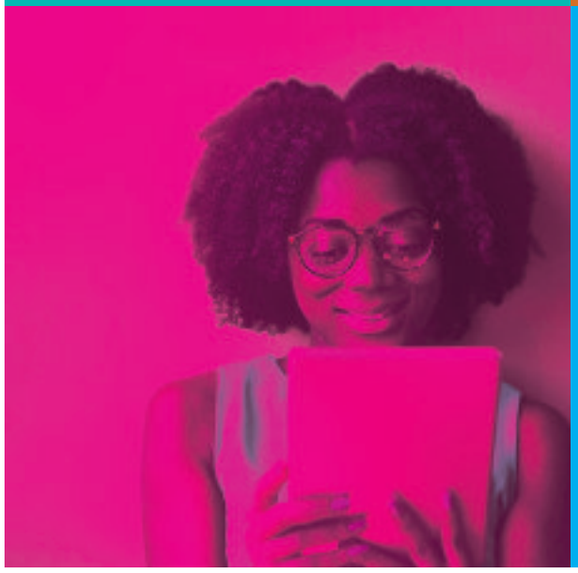

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